

THE MAGAZINE OF CINEMA & TELEVISION FANTASY N°47 70p

STARBURST™

SPECIAL FANTASY PREVIEW ISSUE!

FEATURING THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

INTERVIEW WITH THE SCRIPTER OF
THE CAT PEOPLE

PLUS FULL COLOUR PICTURES

PREVIEWS OF THE FORTHCOMING

HEARTBEEPS

THE THING

HUMUNGUS

PARASITE

AND REVIEWS OF

CONAN

SWAMP THING





HEARTBEEPS

WE TAKE AN ADVANCE LOOK AT THIS FANTASY/COMEDY WHICH STARS BERNADETTE PETERS.

PARASITE

STARBURST LOOKS AHEAD TO THE FIRST OF THE NEW WAVE OF THREE DIMENSIONAL FILMS HEADED OUR WAY IN THE AUTUMN.

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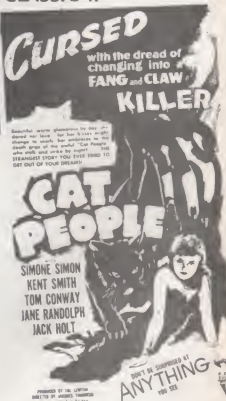
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STARBURST LETTERS

METROPOLIS NOTES

It's disgusting! Having read your article on Clive Patel's *Metropolis—The Future Truth*, I note that his studio is called Mowgli Film Productions Inc. I have it on good authority that in Rudyard Kipling's Jungle Books (as opposed to the Disney film) Mowgli was a character who spent most of the time running around stark naked—god knows what he must have got up to. Naturally, they cleaned it up for the Disney version, but it's still pretty disgusting to see such a disreputable name attached to such a worthy new film project.

Disgusted of Chatham.

P.S. I hope my use of the word "nakad" didn't shock you too much. Oh, said it again! Wash my mouth out with soap and water.

While it was gratifying to see our film *Metropolis—The Future Truth* receiving so much coverage in *Starburst 45*, I feel I should point out a few errors that slipped past Phil Edwards and Alan Murdoch in their article.

Firstly, I think it should be realised that the film is original material, based on an original idea of Mr Patel's conceived while he was in a drunken stupor in a barrel of apple cores. I have undertaken extensive research at the Ballaghadreen Institute Of Science Fiction and can find no mention of the film *Metropolis*, quoted in your article as being the "great-granddaddy of all sf movies". On this same subject I believe also that you misquoted Mr Patel in your article. In the sentence "I am first seeing the great Fritz Lang masterpiece at the British Film Institute...", the word "masterpiece" should be "hair-piece", for "Fritz" Lang is Mr Patel's hairdresser. From these facts it is clear that the photos from the "original" film are all bogus. The first scene shows "Big Bill's Burger Emporium" in Calcutta, the second shows C-3PD after the operation, the third is the mass-beheading sequence from *Somewhere in Time* and the fourth is a view of Wigan International Airport.

Secondly, I think that my part in the realization of the film should have been gloated over to a much greater extent than it was in your article. I spent the greater part of 14 minutes completing the matte paintings for the film, at a total cost of 10½p, and this after the producers had already spent £3 million on enormous cardboard sets, which unfortunately became rather soggy and unusable during the flooding scenes. It should also be pointed out that I undertook the project knowing full well that I would receive no fee, although I admit that this was partly because while re-decorating Mr Patel's living room I painted over the Picasso above his mantelpiece.

There were also a few mistakes in your special effects coverage of the movie. I do not actually create my masterpieces with watercolours on glass, since I have perfected a method of drawing on tissue paper with

crayons, which I feel adds a lovely ethereal quality to my work. Bill Ribbet is not in fact French, but is Austro-Norwegian, and was actually the joint effects supervisor, his co-supervisor being Hank Harvard, famous for his work on the Australian space opus *Infinity*, and on a series of anti-cid pill commercials. And at risk of being called a "IS?E", I must point out some design defects in Bill's optical printer. The machine was actually constructed by stealing the blueprints to ILM's optical printer, building 16 of them and sticking them together with Elastoplast and Sellotape. Unfortunately, all the projectors run at different speeds, making it rather difficult to match up a final composite.

Finally, though Mr Patel is the guiding religious fanatic behind the movie, Mowgli Film Productions is only a subsidiary of BFN Productions, and the real powers behind the film are Henry E. Goldblum, the acclaimed producer of *Infinity*, and his director on the same movie, James (Cult of the Blue Boomerang, *Night of the Wallaby*) Blacksmith. Incidentally, publicity on both films was handed by Alan Murdoch.

Shamus O'Reilly,

c/o Duncan Rose,
Wrexham, Clywd.

P.S. I have just received the enclosed photo back from the producers, and can safely allow you to print it in your magazine, since there is absolutely no chance whatsoever that it will appear in the finished film. It shows Maria's summer house to which she retreats after being seduced by a battery operated transistor radio. The original photo showed a view of New York's 5th Avenue, into which was matted the summer house, the lake and the evening glow in the sky. If I say so myself, you'd never know that before I started work the photo contained the World Trade Centres and 15 other skyscrapers. Note in particular the meticulously painted-in blue mateline, specially added to create the illusion of top quality Flash Gordon style effects work.

This has to be a bogus letter. We don't believe for a minute that Shamus O'Reilly wrote this. Is there a graphologist in the house?

Being a dabbling in movie making I was fascinated to read your report on the

making on *Metropolis the Future Myth*. I did think however, that it was just a little unfair of you to reveal the secrets behind the revolutionary special effects of the film as certain unscrupulous film makers might try to imitate the technique before the film makes its impact. It is, however, nice to see that Chas Phillips has been given control over a major commercial feature. I have long been an admirer of his work and it has always amazed me that he has never been fully recognised as the genius he undoubtedly is. I thought it might interest *Starburst* readers that the NFT recently had a programme of all his greatest work. While only lasting fifteen minutes I feel it was probably the most worth-while visit to the NFT all year. Included in the programme was Phillips' the *Pimp* and the *Showgirl* which you failed to mention in your brief summary of his films. This is in my opinion the greatest of his films. It concerns the story of a pimp (a part played with remarkable clarity by Sidney Fungus) who meets a stripper (Edith Plinge was never better!) and is so touched by the goodness of her heart that he gives everything up to become a door to door





salesman. Despite this deceptively simple plot in the film's three minute running time Phillips gives more insight into the human condition than Ingmar Bergman has in his last ten movies. I think many film-makers today could learn much from this quiet, strangely

enigmatic character. I'm sure that when his first major film is released many Starburst readers will share my enthusiasm and will be impressed as I was by his truly amazing visual style.

Stanley Kubrick,
 (no relation).

Phil Edwards must be congratulated for his article on **Metropolis: The Future Truth** although I feel that I must point out that he made several errors and omissions. I recently had the fortune of meeting director Ches Phillips in a local burger bar where he kindly set the record straight and provided me with information I would like to share with other Starburst readers.

Firstly, **Future Truth** is not Phillips' first film. In actual fact, in 1980 he wrote and directed a full-length feature for Roger Corman, entitled **Zombies In Hollywood**. Unfortunately, the film was re-edited and was released for a very short, unsuccessful run with a Terry Wogan travelogue.

Chas also informed me that in fact George Lucas is bank-rolling the project for Mowgli Film Productions and to save on production costs, some of the film was shot in Tunisia during the making of **Raiders**. If you look at the photo you printed of the matte painting, you may recognise the location from **Star Wars**.

Lastly, I was told that the plum role of Merie in the film has gone to Jamie Lee Curtis!

Sadly, Ches had to leave (he had a meeting with some people about a possible video deal) but he insisted on paying for my chocolate milkshake and cheese burger.

All I can say is, look out Lucas, Spielberg, Coppola, et al, Ches Phillips is coming?
 Yours on footleedetailly Australian film critics.

Mike Jenner,
 Hatfield.

I think yourselves and other Starburst readers might be interested to hear that the Guest of Honour at my local SF convention, Wotacon, held in early April, was none other than Bill Ribbet, special effects wizard on the forthcoming **Metropolis—The Future Truth**.

Naturally, he was quizzed exhaustively about the film's effects, particularly those "huge machines operated by the workers of Metropolis" mentioned in your intriguing article in **Starburst 45**. Bill remained evasive, but did say that

one of the main concerns had been the danger of pieces of machinery falling from one of the vast constructions and injuring one of the hundreds of extras.

To avoid this possibility all the machinery had been made from rubber. This had the advantage of looking solid and weighty, while being completely harmless.

If a piece of machinery fell on an actor, the prop bounced harmlessly away. The reverse was also true. If an actor fell on a piece of machinery, the actor bounced harmlessly away.

"This happened fairly frequently and tended to speed up the pace of the action," explained Ribbet. "In fact during the scenes of the workers' revolt everyone was bouncing off everything, and vice versa, and if it looks good on screen we might retitle the film **Metropolis—the Pinball Table**."

Well, Starburst's fascinating feature and Bill's comments have persuaded me to put the film at the top of my "must see" list. But it seems we will all have to wait a while yet as Bill said the film has a provisional release date of April 1, 1983.

Martin Feekins,
 Bourne, Lincs.

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We regret that we cannot enter into correspondence with individual readers. There just aren't enough hours in the day!

FLICKERS BY TIM QUINN & DICKY HOWETT



THINGS TO COME

POSTER POSER

I'm starting this month with a film poster. The early ad art for a new British sci-fi movie. Harley Cokkiss, as you can plainly see, starts shooting it on June 14. Good for him!

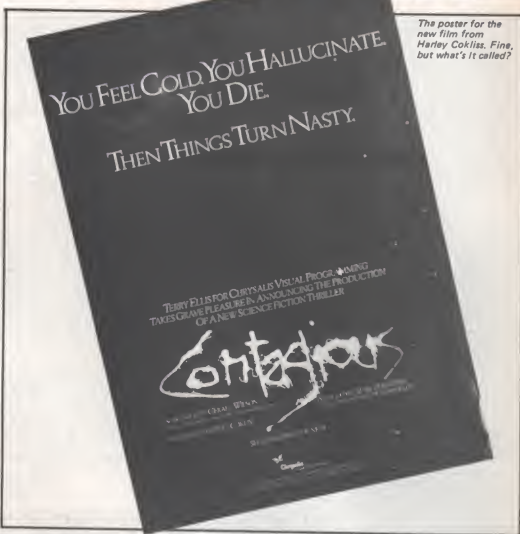
Harley, of course, worked on the second unit of *The Empire Strikes Back* (careers are made that way) and has since completed his big Roger Corman number, *Battletruck*, down-under in New Zealand. He's on his way, is Harley. He's also a good pal of *Starburst*, so it's always a pleasure to give him a plug... if only I could!

Look again at the poster... It has an excellent hype line. It has all the necessary information (the producer, the exec producer... script by Gerald Wilson, who did so many for Michael Winner... even where the original scenario emanated from). It doesn't have any casting, which means everyone is still negotiating with actors and what's worse, actors' agents.

What it also doesn't have is a title anyone can read...

If you work the title out before reading it in good, old-fashioned typesetting at the end of this month's column, phone us up and you can win a prize of your choice, either (a) the spectacles of the poster's designer (he obviously has no use for them anymore) or (b) a genuine, still unfresh pair of Editor Alan McKenzie's jogging shorts. First caller will also get from me a case of the ripest caemembert cheese from my neighbourhood *supermarche*.

Meanwhile, I'm handing this ad over to our de-coding department while I get on with the month's readable news.



The poster for the new film from Harley Cokkiss. Fine, but what's it called?

NEWSFLASH!

You'll know where the bodies—limbs?—are in *Friday The 13th Part III*. In your lap! The newest of the summer camp gross-outs was shot, at the last minute, in 3-D. You have been—LOOK OUT FOR THAT AXE!—warned.

TREKKIE TITLE

And the most important item is, thank heaven, the new Admiral Kirk movie will open in America on June 4 not as *Star Trek—The Motion Picture—Part II*. Paramount say it'll be called more simply (?) *Star Trek: The Vengeance of Khan*.

Who Khan? Oh c'mon you must remember... Ricardo Montalban played him back in 1967 (No 21 in the first 66-67 season). Writers C. Wilbur and Gene Coon created Khan in the *Space Seed* episode in which Kirk and the rest of the *Enterprise* came across an abandoned wreck of a spaceship. Inside it were 72 bodies in a state of suspended animation. Khan was their leader and once revived, he and his chums were superheroes. Well, he's back and Richard Montalban plays him again fifteen years later.

Seems to me as if one of the old scripts has merely been dusted down

for the new film, or at best, one of the scripts never shot when the TV series was junked in 1969. And obviously Paramount chose this one for its superman-with-superpowers gimmicks allowing the new Trekkie movie to cash in more on the world of Chris Reeve than the less-than-stupendous success of the first movie.

The new one is no continuation, more of a flash-back if anything. So maybe William Shatner will be merely Capt Kirk again this time?

CONNERY AS BOND?

Old projects never die, they just fade away into new ownership... Two separate outfits, on opposite sides of the Atlantic, are drumming up interest—and much intrigue—in the renewed 1976 plan to bring Sean Connery back to Bondage. When I talked to Sean about what happened to the '76 *Warhead* script, written by Len Oighton and Sean for the *Thunderball* producer, Kevin McGlorey, he said (*Starburst* 42) "the legal factors were harder to go through than to make the film." And so he walked away from the project in 1978. It's far from dead, though. The idea, at least, if not the actual *Warhead* script.

Item: Ex-actor Mark Damon (the

juvenile lead in Corman's *Fall of the House of Usher*, 1960) and his Producers Sales Organisation have been checking—very quietly—on customers' interest in the Sean-back-as-Bond-again notion... for the past few months. This concerns a (not the) script which has found its way into hands of producer Jack Schwartzman in Hollywood... No title issued, but the story has 007 aged 60, rushed back into Her Majesty's service for a vital mission after ten years in the retirement cold. (The Falklands, perhaps).

Item: *Christiane F*'s producer, Bernd Eichinger, boss of Neue Constantin distributors in Munich, has already announced a March 25, 1983, opening date for what he calls "the new James Bond 007 1983, the newest edition of the most successful film series of all times." Bernd is not saying anymore for the moment, except that his budget is gauged between the ten-twelve million dollar range (less than half of a Moore Bond), and that his script has nothing to do with *Warhead*. But, *ja, ja*, he'd love Connery in the role.

For the record, Connery is 52 on August 25. He's played older and I'm sure he could be attracted to playing Bond again, particularly without recourse to a toupee. And he has nothing on his immediate schedule, except a

break, after becoming

SIR SEAN!

Movies just take a little longer to set up than stars might like. Sean Connery was telling us the other month how his next film might be *Sir Gawain and The Green Knight* for the young Brit director, Stephen Weeks. In fact, Sean had hoped to be finished with his role—"like a couple of weeks" in Northern France—before the end of last year. It didn't happen. But it's happening now.

Stephen Weeks has finally found a backer for his script (penned with Howard C. Penn) and Sean is still set as *The Green Knight* opposite the last screen Tarzan, Miles O'Keefe, speaking for himself for the first time (?) as Sir Gawain. Only things that's changed is the title. *Sword of the Valiant*.

The film's backers are the dreaded *Lemon Popsicle* producers, Hollywood's Israelis: Menahem Golan and Yoram Globus. They've come in for a lot of stick (especially in this column) over the years since switching bases from Israel to Los Angeles for their el cheapo and overly-hyped movies. But their Cannon Group is suddenly hot what with *Death Wish II*, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *Body and Soul* to come. They, at least, put their money to good use.

Compiled by Tony Crawley

Their '82 production line-up (costing 95 million bucks) also include another Michael Winner film (a re-make of Margaret Lockwood's *Wicked Lady* with Faye Dunaway as the highway-person), plus assignments for Martin Sheen, Bruce Dern, Brooke Shields, Terence Hill and Bud Spencer, a fourth *Lemon Popsicle* must-miss adventure, a new *Gunga Din* and, oh yes...

GREEN HERCULES

With *The Incredible Hulk* back on the tele-shelf, or more directly, safe back in his comic-books, Lou Ferrigno has found alternative employment. He's in Italy re-treading the old Steve Reeves' musclebound numbers with Cannon's *Hercules*... "from the days of myth and magic" runs the dull hype. Bruno Mattei is directing Claudie Fréresso's scenario and Morricone, who else, supplies the score.

Lou will wind up dubbed into Italian, and then from Italian back into Americanese. His co-stars include Mery Stevin, who I've never heard of (and I'm sure that the feeling's mutual), and big Brad Harris. He was around in the Steve Reeves days in the '50s when almost every Italian movie boasted a non-acting musclemen. Brad, who could act, was also married to the dazzling Czech beauty, Dinka Berova, she who replaced Ursula Andress in the *She* sequel film. We all met up once at Estree. But 'tis difficult to remember Brad too well when becoming so totally smitten with Dinka... Ah, happy days.

HERCULES II

Yes, already... Even before the Mey shooting began on Lou's non-green muscle man in Rome, Italy's Sergio Corbucci started putting his more modern Herculean idea into action. This brings back, some 2,700 years on, the "world's mightiest man" to modern day happenings in *Hercules in New York*. "The challenges," says Corbucci, "are unlimited. And the comedy is outrageous!"

So... how you coming along with that opening poster? Can... That's for sure. Then what? *Catwalk*. No, no, surely not. That's most unkind of me... I Okay then, but what—exactly? *Cant*... yes, it's a t. Definitely a t. Anyway, I think it's a t... And then... Oh, I've no time for all this. Get back to you later...

SOMETHING'S COOKIN'

According to one of my trusty London spies—Alexander Kalfakis, by name; trust by fame—George Lucas, scenarist Larry Kasdan and actor Robert Duvall have been having huddles in the Hilton. Their greetings, or Duvall's anyway, were loud. Their conversation was not. But it did sound as if Bobby Duvall is going to find his way into the *Raiders*



Spoilsports. Caroline Munro's new horror trip with her *Mantic* co-star Joe Spinell was shot during the 1981 Cannes festival—but premiered in March at the second American Film Market instead of where it should have been... Cannes '82. Maybe that's just as well, judging by the poster. Whoever did this ad art (?) is that really supposed to be our Caroline? has never been too Cannes. There is no cinema like that in the town, much less one with "Cannes Film Festival" on its marquee (in English!). Although the title of the Hotel Carlton (on the right) is in the correct French order, it does not resemble this sloppy art at all. For a kick-off, the Carlton is a white building. This drawing looks more like one of the hostesses at Davos.

One last point (I mean, if the poster is this slipshod, what about the movie?), there are never any Hollywood premiere style searchlights utilised at Cannes. Not really very much they've got right, is there?

sequel, "He'd make a great German nesty," says my spy. Indeed, he would. Then again, Duvall could be providing a secret cameo in *Revenge of the Jedi*... he'd make a damned good Jedi, too.

There is every good reason to presume that Lucas is finding a niche somewhere for Bobby. They're old friends from way, way back. Duvall was the star of Lucas' re-made college movie, *THX: 1138* in 1971.

GEORGE'S OSCARS

And in case you missed them in the *Chariots of Fire* headlines—or even in that lonnnggg yawn of an Oscarcast—Lucasfilm's *Raiders* picked up four Oscars in March. (Same number as *Chariots*.) They went to editor Michael Kahn, art directors Norman Reynolds, Leslie Dilley and Michael Ford (set decor). The best sound nod went to the *Raiders* team of Billy Varney, Steve Meslow, Gregg Landeker and Roy Charman—and the visual effects trophy was shared between Richard Edlund, Kit West, Bruce Nicholson and Joe Johnston. (Well, not shared, as they each get an Oscar for the mantelpiece). Four wins out of eight nominations—not bad fellas!

Rick Baker picked up the new Best Make-up Oscar, by the way, for *That American Werewolf in London*. There was one other nominee in this category—Stan Winston for *Heartbeats*. The Academy went with the winning movie...

PRICE DIES AGAIN

Vince Price is killed by American comic Steve Martin in his new offering. As far as I know, Price has never met Martin in his life. Much less on the set of *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid*. Our man Price is simply ghost-starring in the new film... edited in from a previous movie!

Martin and his *Jerk* director, Carl Reiner, wrote their new script, but Bud Molin wins top honours for cutting in star guests from seventeen other movies in a gimmicky notion that works well enough, but soon enough becomes tiresome. Other guests include Humphrey Bogart, Joan Crawford, James Cagney, Bud Lancaster, Ava Gardner, Fred McMurray, Bette Davis, Kirk Douglas, Lana Turner, Veronica Lake... It may sound sacrilegious, but Steve Martin and his British beauty co-star Rachel Ward are better than the oldsters. Then again, they're not restricted to yesterday's dialogue being pressed into service for today's script. Clever... for all that.

ENTER: MADMAN

Timing is the big secret of a smash film. Ask new film-makers Gary Sales and Joe Giannone. Ex-film school pels, they formed a company with the high blown name of Living Legend Company in New

Where were we...? Cost... yeah! Or even... Coste... yeah, it sure looks an'! Okay, what we got now. Coste...? Or is it an a? No, e d, decidedly a d... So Costed...? Whosit? Coste's brother, mother... uncle? No, no, can't be. Well, look, I'll leave it to you...

THINGS TO COME

York. They worked out that the best way to get a reputation—not to mention, grainstuff—was to join the horror market. So they started shooting a grisly number called, quite simply, **Madman**. That was in September 1980.

"These other horror thrillers were shooting when ours was," says Gary Sales (good name for a film producer!), "and there were about thirty around at the time thanks to the success of **Friday The 13th**. And all the major companies, especially Paramount, were picking up horror pictures. We were part of the boom."

Were is right... By the time the couple had shot and edited **Madman**, they found the market glutted (not to say gutted) with about a hundred cheap 'n' nasty horror vehicles. Nobody wanted theirs any more. They were out in the cold.

Happy ending, though. The brand new Jansan Farley Pictures company was about ready to launch its first release on the market... and didn't have a terror trip. Living Legend, dying on its feet, heard this news. Result: **Madman** is now on release **State-side**... two years later. Moral: One horror number is enough. The Legends are now planning **Dream Scheme**. Which from their synopsis sounds like **Fame II**. Well, if you're aiming to be a Legend in your own lifetime, you've got to roll with the punches. "There's no free lunch in this business," adds Joe Giannone.

LARRY'S ULTIMATE

By now, writer-director Larry Cohen should have been reaping the plaudits and profits for out-Bonding 007 with **I, The Jury**. It was Larry, after all, who decided to revive Mickey Spillane's tough hombre private dick, Mike Hammer. He wrote the action-packed script. He also got sacked as director in the first weeks when the movie went over-budget. It's still Larry's script up there—and "quite the ultimate thriller," someone said at a recent screening.

Not so, say Larry. He's admitted that line to the film he rushed into instead of **Jury**. This is a thriller about an Aztec cult alive and well in New York. Larry calls it, **Serpent: The Ultimate Thriller**, which is just asking for trouble with critics. David Carradine, Richard Roundtree, Michael Moriarty and Candy Clark (from **Nic Roag's Man Who Fell...**) are the stars and Larry's old mentor, the craator of AIP, Sam Arkoff, has chosen the movie as the first release of his new AIP outfit (Arkoff International Pictures).

Larry's movie sounds right up Sam's exploitative street. These cult members in Big Apple besach one of their gods to lay some eggs in the Chrysler Building....

BARTEL RETURNS

There's been too long a silence from writer-director and sometime actor Paul

Bartel since the mid-1970s hey-days of **Death Race 2000**—and the automative Frankenstein idea he once told us about, **Frankencar** (half-man, half-car). Not a lot has gone Paul's way since then. Getting the budget backing has always been his problem. So he kept his hand in, acting in Corman's items like **Hollywood Boulevard** and **Rock 'n Roll High School**, and turning journalist for some film magazines in the United States. (David Carradine, his **Death Race** star, was one of his assignments).

Well, now Paul's got his new—bizarre—movie out. At last. It's called **Eating Raoul** and it's taken him a few years to get together, as friends and neighbours found enough money, here and there, to keep the movie going in-between long lay-offs.

It's a very black comedy. Paul stars as well as directing, and is married to Mary Woronov in it, so that'll give you some idea of what to expect. No a lot, but some. They play the Blands. "They're square," says Paul. "They're in love and they kill people." For money, what else?

One American critic has hailed the film as being more original than most major studio features and Bartel's buddies are also high on it, as well. "Totally outrageous and funny," is Martin Scorsese's verdict. John Landis adds that it's "a fresh and unpredictable comedy that is also extremely funny." I look forward to see it at Cannes around the time you're reading this.

FLASH IN THE PAN?

Don't know about you, but I haven't heard a thing about Sam J. Jones since **Flash Gordon**. Presumably, Dino De Laurentiis is keeping him under wraps for the inevitable **Flash II**. Jason Williams, alias **Flesh Gordon**, is alive and well and turning into a macho-mayhem hero in **Copkillers**, by the way.

AUNTY LOVES ADRIENNE

In a surprisa move at the recent American Film Market, Aunty BBC snapped up **The Next One** movie—and not just for next repeats on BBC2, either! The Beeb negotiated all possible rights to the Nico Mastorakis movie: that's for theatrical, or cinema release... TV... and video.

Needless to say, Mastorakis is delighted, although as he adds, he's not that surprised as, "If I may say so myself... I was fortunate enough to have one of the best films in the market. Obviously, the BBC are very selective and discriminating buyers, and they will not buy a picture for their network unless it is a promising and classy act. Let alone theatrical distribution."

Whether or not, the BBC plan to open **The Next One** in cinemas first, or sell the theatrical rights to another company, or indeed withhold it from cinemas, is not yet clear. Certainly the Beeb rarely have anything to do with cinema releases of any of their acquisitions or BBC-made films.

Footnote: Mastorakis loves Adrienne



No comment. Well, I mean what the hell can you say about a flying porker? Except maybe: Duck!



Three Dog Night. Rottweiler dogs were used in The Omen's cemetery scene. That fact, plus an article about the savage pooches in an LA paper, led to America's first 3-D movie since the good old days. It's produced by and stars North Carolina's Orson Welles, a certain Earl Owensby. His director reposes in the handle of Worth Keeter II, which makes him sound like a champion dog at Crufts, and the beasts with the fangs were trained by someone apparently straying in from Jawa country: Charles Sharkady.

Although the first to be shot, Rottweiler is not the first new American 3-D item on release. It was beaten to the box-offices by Charles Band's Pursuive, a monster number (make-up effects by Stan Winston) set in 1992. And Friday The 13th Part III is also due soon.

THINGS TO COME



Sexist. The feminists will be up in arms about this one from writer-director Jack Sholder, with all the old faithfuls—Palance, Pleasance and Laodae.

A Monkee in the 23rd Century

Michael Dolenz, former child-star of TV's *Circus Boy* and teen-idol as one of The Monkees, is producing a new science fiction comedy for Central Independent Television. Shooting started at Central's cistern studios in July. Titled *Luna*, after the central (and, indeed, Central) character, the show is set in outer space in the 23rd century and is said to be "designed for exactly the same sort of audience" as Dolenz' current LWT series *Metal Mickey*. Dolenz himself calls it a "comedy/drama/fantasy sci-fi/adventure show".

Central's Controller of Young People's Programmes, Lewis Rudd (who was responsible for *Worzel Gummidge* while at Southern Television) says he has high hopes for the new series: "What I like about Michael Dolenz," he says, "is that he is a very American, brash, sock-it-to-'em approach to comedy, which is very different to our tradition; and I think the new show will appeal to the **Happy Days/Mork & Mindy** audience."

The original idea for the series came from Dolenz although scripts are by two relatively unknown actors Colin Proctor and Colin Bennett. As well as the central teenage heroine Luna and a bunch of buddies, there is The Bureau Being, whom one insider described as an odd combination of Derth Vader and The Wizard of Oz—he's incredibly awe-inspiring but, when he takes his helmet off, he's actually a rather small Civil Servant type terribly baset by instructions from on high.

After the disappointment of Nigel Kneale's *Kivring* from LWT, it's good that Central are willing to take a chance on science-fiction comedy with Luna. Dolenz, though, is not putting all his eggs in one basket. He is also producing another 7-part *Metal Mickey* series for LWT as well as two LWT pilots for new shows; and his company Filmworks has produced a pilot for Nutshell Classics, his first commission from Channel Four. Not bad for someone who started with elephants.

John Fleming

Berbeau, too. She's starring in his next Greece-set movie, *The Wind*, opposite Simon McCorkindale from the *Quatermass* wrap-up.

VIDEO MOVIES

You've played the game—now see the movies... Hard on the heels(?) of Disney's *Troia*, two more video game thrillers are before Stateside cameras, *Spaceblasters* and *Defender*. And there is, but of course, a third in the wings. Paul Mayersberg, scenarist of Nic Roeg's *Man Who Fell To Earth*, and his new movie, *Eureka*, has completed his first draft of a movie called *Labyrinth*, described by one of his two girl producers as "a science fantasy rooted in the new age of video games."

Anyone out there interested in my (very) rough draft of movie about this guy going absolutely nuts and wrecking all kinds of havoc on an unsuspecting town's population, and all because she can't master Rubik's Cube. No? Okay, look... I'll make him a girl. She gets real mad, too, keeps tearing her clothes off and charging down the high street, slaving at the mouth. No? Oh well, back to the tripewriter...

MINI BOND

While the rumours and back-room meetings go on about that possible Connery comeback as 007, prepara to meet a new Bond... all the way from the Philippines. The actor is called Weng Weng. He's a midget... 3'3½ft high, or low, depends on your point of view. He's begun a series of mini-Bonds, the first of which has already been bought for Britain and America and rejoices in the wondrous title of... **For Your Height Only!**

Right, where were we...? *Contad*, no, doubt if it's a d, somehow. So it's an e and a j, perhaps. *Contad*—can't be right! Any *Scrabble* fans out there? Here's your chance... Let's be hearing from you. Please!

BONANZA

Pity about Laker Airlines... It's all happening in the United States this summer. *Star Trek II* and *Tobe Hooper's* Spielberg-produced *Pottergeist* open on June 4, Spielberg's *ET* bows on June 18, John Carpenter's *The Thing* a week later on June 25. The re-issue of *Raiders* kicks off July, followed by the Gary Kurtz-Jim Henson number, *Dark Crystal*, Friday *The 13th Part III* and on August 20, *Superman II* flies again... *Halloween III* takes a little longer. The Nigel Kneale script is shot, edited, scored and released by October.

ODD TEAMS

2001's Keir Dullea joins *Psycho's* Vera Miles in *Brainwaves*—not to be confused (although that's the idea) with Doug Trumbull's *Brainstorm*. Ulli

Lommel directs and Tony Curtis is also cast. So that's what happens to Jamie Lee's Pop... *Alien's* Harry Dean Stanton meets *The Avengers'* Patrick MacNee in (don't get too excited) some frolic called *Young Doctors in Love*. So far the only young thing about the casting is... Sean Young.

MESMERISING

Leslie Caron's producer husband, Michael Laughlin, obviously digs filming down-under—and so does Woody Allen's actor mate, Michael Murphy. Laughlin headlined Murphy in his *Strange Behaviour* (ex-Dean Kida) film in New Zealand last year. Now he's setting up *Mesmerised* in Australia, again with Murphy in the cast. But first he has to find a startling, new, unknown Aussie girl for the mesmerising lead role...

Laughlin's next project will probably be back in America. *Strange Invaders* is classed as a tribute, with some laughs, to "those bug-eyed monster apics of the 1950s where aliens take over a small Mid-Western town." Just when you thought it was safe to take a package holiday to the mid-West...

MIAOW

Poul Schrader's re-make of Jacques Tourneur's 1942 *Cat People* has finally opened Stateside. So how is it? Ah, now you're asking. "The subject matter and the level of sex and horror are perfect for a major international film," says Poul's producer Chuck Fries, *The Martian Chronicles* guy. "Poul is brilliant, truly an auteur who must put his complete and total creative stamp on every aspect of a film." Well, you wouldn't expect him to say anything else, would you?

In *Time* magazine, though, critic Richard Schickel says Schrader is the kind of director who leaves no bra unhooked, no limb untorn from its socket in his pursuit of what he believes to be the true and terrible image. "The film serves best serves the values of the dimmest lurker in the deepest shadows of the grind house; it has lots of nudity, plenty of gross-out guts and gore, two or three scares—and it makes no sense whatsoever."

Ah... probably works a damn sight better than *Conan The Bore*, though!

So what did you make of it? *Contad... Contactor. Containder. Contaminante. Contemptible...? No, well, being rather more contemplative than, perhaps, the rest of you, I sat and stared and considered and thought, got a pain in my eyes (and my butt), and decided the best thing to do was to check back in my columns of the previous few months.*

And there I found it: *Harley Kottliss'* new movie is *Contagious!*

So why didn't they write that? Clearly!

LAST WORD

Will somebody warn the fire brigade. *The Exterminator II* is coming...

Val Lewton's 1942 production of *The Cat People* was an economically produced horror *noir*, which in the skillful hands of Jacques Tourneur managed an air of poetic menace and sub-textual eroticism. The film has endured through the years and has been for at least the last decade considered a classic of the genre. Now comes Paul Schrader's remake, forty years after the original version. It would be too easy simply to dismiss it with a glib "why bother", but the film deserves a little more than that, if not much.

Written by schlockmeister Alan Ormsby (*Deranged*, *Children Shouldn't Play With Dead Things*, *Dead of Night*, *My Bodyguard*) the script for this new version remains faithful to DeWitt Bodeen's earlier work regarding the very basics of the plot. Once again it's the story of a cult of cat people whose response to sex is to turn into mauling panthers who can only be released from this form by killing. Where the censorship and sensibilities of 1942 caused Bodeen, Lewton and Tourneur to portray this somewhat taboo subject matter through suggestion and shadows (both visually and symbolically), Schrader and Ormsby splatter away at it with all the license of a couple of porno merchants.

All the fault may not rest with Ormsby's script as it has been suggested that Schrader contributed much to the screenplay and the film certainly looks and sounds like a Schrader feature. Bodeen's original surely dealt with sexual repression and inhibition, the loss of virginity and the nature of the beast in man within the context of a low budget horror show and it's likely that it was these features which attracted Schrader to the project. *The Cat People* contains more nudity and sexual activity during its running time than any feature in mainstream cinema than I can think of. Now I'm not against such things, but the stars of *The Cat People* take their clothes off with such alarming regularity that it becomes almost boring.

The Cat People is a movie about sexuality in various forms and those of you who have seen Schrader's other films (*American Gigolo*, *Blue Collar*, *Hardcore* and the Schrader-scripted *Taxi Driver*) will immediately recognise the director's

predilections and sexual/religious obsessions. Seemingly, in Schrader's world the loss of virginity is equalled to the beast being set loose.

Where Lewton left this side of the story in the shadows and let it register on a more subliminal level, Schrader hammers it home in scene after scene. Couple with this the potentially incestuous relationship between Nastassia Kinski and Malcolm McDowell and a couple of sequences of outlandishly sleazy, ink sex and what *The Cat People* becomes is a sleazy picture masquerading under the guise of an arty horror movie.

And the horror gets pretty graphic at times. One particularly nasty scene shows a man having his arm ripped off by one of the cats. Muscles tear, sinews stretch and snap like elastic bands, bones break and the blood laps around Kinski's feet. Another sequence has Oliver Yates, played by John Heard, dissect the panther which was once Malcolm McDowell. In gory close-up we watch as he slits the dead cat from throat to tail only to find the remnants of the human form inside. Tom Burman's splatter effects are well-designed if occasionally a little too graphic for their own good, and it was Burman who handled the much reported transformation scene. With *American Werewolf* and *The Howling* showing what *can* be done with this type of sequence, perhaps I was expecting a little too much, but in fact the transformation is pretty dull stuff, though there is a striking shot as a panther breaks through the shell that was Nastassia Kinski.

Perhaps the most disappointing aspect of *The Cat People* is that it breaks no new ground in its treatment of the subject. Two of the best sequences are lifted directly from the original, and even then they are no better than the 1942 version. One is the justly famous "bus" in which Alice (Annette O'Toole), Oliver's other love, thinks she is being followed. In the original it was through RKO's back lot streets, this time 'round it is through a park. The denouement is the same in both. Just as suspense reaches a pitch a bus pulls into view from frame left. The effect, in the original, was a jolting shock. Schrader's version thanks to slack cutting is a damp



CAT PEOPLE

Review by Phil Edwards



squib. Likewise, the swimming pool scene suffers in the same way.

The Cat People is actually quite a hodge-podge of ideas, many lifted not only from Lewton but also from recent horror features. There's a vague attempt at humour, like **The Howling**, with references to cats on tv, commercials and so on. A sequence which takes place on a rain-soaked bridge as the cat is surrounded by police is more than reminiscent of the climax of **American Werewolf**. And the final scene in which McDowell and Kinski meet in the hereafter looks suspiciously like Lucio Fulci's netherworld in **The Beyond**.

On the bonus side is a truly stunning opening sequence in which we see the origins of the Cat People cult as a young woman is tied to a tree as a sexual sacrifice for the panthers. Albert Whitlock supplies his usual superb matte paintings and visual effects and John Bailey's cinematography is suitably seductive and dreamlike. Performances also rate highly, with all four principles treating the subject with a suitable level of commitment and intensity. The production design of Edward Richardson and Ferdinando Scarlotti (Visual Consultant) is simply gorgeous and **The Cat People** surely rates as one of the best looking horror movies ever.

However the major problems with **The Cat People** is that it is too long. Where Lewton and Tourneur turned out a seventy-three minute feature, this new version runs at slightly over two hours and so little happens for the first hour that I began to wonder if we weren't seeing a rough cut of the film. What Schrader and Ormsby have done is to take the original story and pad it out to nearly twice its length and, sadly, as good as Bodeen's original tale is, it simply isn't substantial enough to support the running time. This is even more apparent with Schrader's ideal of making a film about nightmares. The dreamlike imagery and pace might work fine in short bursts, but the effect soon becomes leaden and dull rather than hypnotic.

The Cat People is worth seeing, provided you're not prudish or particularly squeamish. It certainly is a failure, but an interesting one.

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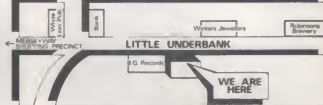
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ROAD GAMES

Review by Alan Jones

Above: In a particularly nerve-racking sequence, Quid (Stacy Keach) counts the hunks of meat in his truck and finds he has one too many. Top and bottom left: Two portraits of Quid, the American truck driver ("I'm not a truck driver, I just drive trucks!") who becomes embroiled in a series of murders on the highways of Australia. Opposite above: Jamie Lee Curtis plays Hitch, a young runaway who, along with Quid, discovers that Death is alive and well and roaming the Australian highways. Opposite below: Quid, armed only with an automobile fan, prepares to confront the killer unaware that Hitch is having her own problems elsewhere.



Another memorable Australian film emerges hot on the fender of *Mad Max* and it shares the same white line fever setting. It's called **Road Games** and while an encapsulation of the story would make it seem like yet another in the long line of stalk and slash movies, it would be grossly underestimating this inventive and quirky film to give that impression. Anybody who has seen producer/director Richard Franklin's previous film, *Patrick*, will know the treats in store. *Patrick* served up almost the same ideas as *Carrie* with its psychokinetic themes and yet cut its own identity

with a great degree of success. *Road Games* adheres to this analysis as well as it takes a familiar and unexceptional story and gives it a high-gloss luminous quality combined with a Hitchcockian style. It is no surprise to learn that Franklin studied under the late master of suspense at the University of Southern California and that *Road Games* is his homage and debt of gratitude to Hitchcock's classic film *Rear Window*. Hitchcock always had suspense with an edge of impudence in his films and used purely cinematic techniques to achieve this. Pupil Franklin's *Road Games* follows these rules



implicitly and the result is a superbly-crafted, immensely enjoyable original.

The **Rear Window** in this instance is the windshield of educated and eccentric truck driver, Pat Quid (Stacy Keach)—"I'm not a truck driver", he says in defence, "I just drive a truck". To quell the boredom of his long journeys across the Outback, he plays games, inventing names and biographies for his fellow travellers on the road and plays classical music on his harmonica to his pet dingo, Boswell. Prior to one of his more debilitating lineahls, he sees a van driver check into a motel with a young hitchhiker and thinks nothing of it until he hears a police report on the radio describing a Jack the Ripper-type murder where the victim has been dismembered. Suddenly he flashes on events of the morning—the gloved hand at the motel window—Boswell sniffing around some strange looking garbage bags—the van driver trying to bury the contents of his lunch box in a lonely part of the desert. Is he imagining it or is he indeed sharing the road with a psychopathic killer? From this point on the film plays its own games on an unsuspecting audience with some superb cat and mouse chases and ever-heightening suspense when it is revealed that Quid himself is the prime suspect for these crimes.

When he breaks a hard and fast rule of never picking up a hitchhiker, he finds in the girl (Jamie Lee Curtis) an ally who wants to help him in his investigations, but she disappears at a gas station while inspecting the van driver's vehicle. The film ends in a Perth alleyway with Quid's truck jammed between the walls, a police car stuck under his chassis and the suspected murderer advancing towards him with a shovel.

The film's hold never lets up until the now obligatory last jolt is administered in the back of Quid's refrigerated truck where he's sure a human torso has been hidden among the frozen slices of pork.

There's only one murder in *Road Games* and it takes place even before the credits have rolled. It is stylishly elegant and full of suggestion—but that is one of Franklin's skills as it is no less horrific, nor indeed are the events to come, because of this restrained approach. He is a director who knows that the mind can realise the worst horrors imaginable and that to show them would be a dull and unconvincing reality. The sense of composition in his work is incredibly good and the Outback has never been used in a more adroit or beautifully lit manner.

Composer Brian May is on hand once again with a Holst inspired score—isn't there anyone else in Australia who can write film music as he seems to have written an unbelievable amount in the last few years?

Stacy Keach allows Quid the full rein of his talents and he is showcased to enormous effect by some very witty dialogue and strong cameo performances from the cast which are all expert thumb-nail characterisations. Jamie Lee Curtis, who should surely know better than to hitch anywhere considering her track record, is perfectly adequate in her extended cameo performance, but quite honestly anybody else would have been just as good. Her name lends a sort of easy categorisation that the film certainly doesn't need, but arguably this may get people to see *Road Games* who perhaps normally wouldn't have made the effort. They would really be missing an excellent film if that were the case. This is an off-beat/off-kilter work within a now all too readily categorised genre framework. It leaves its closest rivals standing with its deft handling of what is a basic B-movie formula. It isn't phony and it isn't ridiculous—I hope this is the beginning of a trend that will be difficult to stop ●

conan

This spread: A selection of scenes from John Milius' *Conan*.



Review by Phil Edwards

It's been a long time coming, has *Conan*. And I really wish that I could be the one to tell you that it's a masterpiece, the final flowering of the Sword and Sorcery genre which has been promised for so long. But folks, *Conan* is terrible, a truly disappointing movie from beginning to end. When it became known that Dino De Laurentiis was the man holding the purse strings, the worst was expected. After all, he had mangled both remakes of *King Kong* and *Flash Gordon* so that they appeared as travesties of their original versions—not an easy thing to do when one considers the general level of ineptitude, forgetting nostalgia, of the Buster Crabbe serials. But wait, weren't we all sure that the chosen director John Milius would be more than a match for the pint-sized producer? Surely Milius had made that superb feature *The Wind and the Lion* a few years ago and had scripted the wonderful *Silent Running*, and wasn't *Big Wednesday* an interesting little picture a couple of years ago?

No, *Conan* is a major disaster despite some really great source material provided all those years ago by Robert E. Howard's *Conan* was a swaggering soldier of fortune, a man who became a king almost by default, a humourless adventurer lusting after action and women in about equal proportions. Conan was a warrior that no matter how high the odds were stacked against him was able to rise victoriously above everything. Conan

was a hero, a super-hero even, often having to defeat the blackest of magic and destroy monsters. Conan might be beaten, stabbed, undergo outlandish tortures or satiate buxom heroines, but ultimately would always return.

So popular were the tales of Howard that even after his death other writers took up the story and penned new pastiches of the Barbarian's adventures. Writers like Sprague DeCamp and Lin Carter. The latter found the milieu so satisfying he even created his own muscled S&S hero in Thorngor. Conan has also been adapted for the comics more than successfully. It was as early as 1970 that Conan was thought of as a motion picture, but a long series of law suits over who held film rights delayed production.

It was the tenacity of producer Ed Pressman (see interview in *Starburst* 45) and literary agent Henry Morrison which finally sorted out the legal complications. Apparently, Pressman became interested in the project when he saw a rough cut of *Pumping Iron*, an odd little documentary about body builders which featured the Austrian Arnold Schwarzenegger, a five time Mr Universe winner.

The script passed through various hands including Marvel Comic's Roy Thomas, and Oliver Stone, writer of the Oscar-winning *Midnight Express*. Directors were slated and then dropped, including Alan Parker, Ralph Bakshi, John Frankenheimer and even Ridley Scott was linked to the project for a time as was Oliver Stone himself. Finally, John Milius took an interest in the project and with the details set the feature was under way. I'll

leave it to the more esoteric and gullible magazines to fill you in on all the details of the film's troubled production history. What we are interested in here is the finished film.

Much of the failure of the film rests with Stone and Milius' screenplay. It was a major mistake to make *Conan*, or at least the first third, an "origins" story. We see Conan as a child, having his village invaded by the steel-seeking hordes led by Thulsa Doom, played by James Earl Jones. An aside here about the matter of typecasting. Unless you've been living under a rock for the past five years, you will be aware that Jones is the voice of Darth Vader. Time and time throughout *Conan*, I kept thinking I was hearing out-takes from one of the *Star Wars* movies. Surely this is the first time in Hollywood history that a voice has been type cast so securely? But back to the narrative. With Baby Conan having seen his mother beheaded (the first of seemingly several in the movie) he's chained to The Wheel of Pain. We see a series of lap dissolves as Baby Conan turns into infant Conan, Little Boy Conan, Teenage Conan, Young Man Conan and then finally into Schwarzenegger Conan. Unfortunately, it reminded of a somewhat similar scene in *The Three Stooges Meet Hercules*.

And so Conan becomes a Pit Fighter, a toughly trained and highly skilled gladiator. Another series of dissolves as Conan turns from a raw recruit into a seasoned fighter. After nearly an hour of this I was yawning like crazy and wondering if *Conan* was going to be the first movie ever that was told completely in lap dissolves. Admittedly in



these early Pit Fighting scenes the atmosphere of the film is almost pure Howard and highly reminiscent of the art of Frank Frazetta, surely the artist who is most responsible for the physical form of Conan we accept today. It seems a pity that Millius has chosen the dissolve as a device, for the sequence lacks any real punch and it is only the gallons of blood which give any sense of the viciousness of the "sport". It all lacks action, somehow and it is this which highlights Conan the Barbarian as being basically an actionless epic.

For some odd reason, Millius keeps his cameras at too great a distance from his action, giving the film a strangely faraway feel. In much the same way, the screenplay suffers from this short-sightedness and the final effect is something like looking down the wrong end of a telescope. But at root the problem is really that Stone and Millius, in their script, have misunderstood the essence of Conan's character. Conan, in this incarnation is simply not heroic enough, a fault shared also by Flash Gordon. This coupled with Schwarzenegger's general non-performance makes the title character become a colourless cardboard cut-out. Further script problems are evident in the way other major characters are barely sketched in, let alone developed. Both Valeria (Sandahl Bergman) and Subotai (Gerry Lopez) are major characters yet, when one of them is killed late into the film we couldn't care less. Another fault with Millius and Stone's script is that it can't make up its mind whether it's straight or jokey. So much of

Conan's dialogue is uttered in such a mock serious way, all portentousness becomes questionable. Then quick as a flash the writers throw in an astonishing anachronism. Bergman's "yuh wanna live forever?" could have you rolling in the aisles. Likewise, Schwarzenegger's delivery is a little difficult to follow at times. Much seems to have been said about the body builder's accent. It's fine. Really. The only problem arises when he has to say more than two lines at a time. His, "Oh Crom, grant me vengeance. And if you don't then go to hell!" pretty well sums up the tone of the film.

Ron Cobb's production design is strangely unspectacular. It is of interest to compare the artist's pre-production paintings for the film which appeared in his book *Colourvision*. Rich in detail they captured an atmosphere in acrylic sadly lacking in a three dimensional filmic realisation. This aspect is even more apparent in the exterior sequences. It was a bad idea shooting the film on location, for Yugoslavia and Spain are geographically far too mundane to do Howard justice. Within these expansive wastelands Cobb's sets look dwarfed and far too insignificant. Thulsa Doom's fortress/temple looks surprisingly frail and far too easy to penetrate. The Crypt in which Conan finds the Atlantean Sword is well-rendered, though Millius surprisingly makes no use of the creepy set. Conan simply falls into the Crypt, sees the mummified corpse of his father, takes the sword and climbs out of the hole. Other Cobb designs lack impact too. The Wheel of Pain is also set in a dwarfing landscape as is the Tree of Woe.

This particular scene is the one in which Conan bites the head of a buzzard as the warrior hangs crucified. It might read well but on the screen becomes laughable.

Visually too, Conan is disappointing. Duke Callaghan's photography is flatly lit and static in the extreme and certainly reveals nothing to show that Millius has indeed a very good eye for composition. Callaghan's work is at odds with Cobb's and the result is a thoroughly dissatisfying series of visuals.

Special effects are pretty ropey too. Nick Alder's giant mechanical snake looks for all the world like a giant mechanical snake and Conan's encounter with the reptile is another potentially exciting sequence thrown away. The non-too-convincing snake attacks Conan during a robbery in one of Thulsa Doom's temples. It looks like much has been cut from the scene, as most of the attack takes place in close-up and like so many scenes in the film contains no build-up or sense or menace. Sandahl Bergman's return from the dead, clad in glittering armour would look more appropriate in something like *Xanadu*. The scene in which Conan, rescued from the Tree of Woe nears death and is saved by the sorcerer Mako is the only sequence of the film which comes close to capturing anything of the essence of Howard. Mako covers Conan in strange characters and awaits the arrival of the Spirits of the Dead to take the warrior to the hereafter. As the optical demons created by Peter Kuran's Visual Concepts Engineering tussle with Bergman & Lopez for the soul of Conan I suddenly realised that I had seen the whole thing before in that superb Japanese horror anthology *Kwaidan*, in the tale of Hoichi, The Earless.

The one outstanding attribute of Howard's novels was action. From page one Conan rarely went more than a few pages without getting involved in a fight of some kind. Conan the movie is a different proposition. With all the potential of making a great action movie, Conan is without memorable action scenes. With the dissolve device used in the Pit Fighting scenes impeding audience involvement and the general plodding of the plot one would expect the film to pick up in the numerous fights and battles which our hero and friends find themselves getting involved in. But no. Despite the weeks and months which were supposedly spent by the cast in intensive training in various forms of martial arts, all the fighting scenes come over in clod-hopperish fashion. Maybe it was something to do with the fact that real (but blunted) swords were often used, but it's very apparent that many of the sword blows are pulled back, further adding to the unconvincing atmosphere which pervades the movie. The climactic battle of the Mounds contains no excitement and despite the lengthy preparations made by Conan, Valeria, Subotai and the Sorcerer for the fight (a bit like *The Magnificent Seven*) it's all over much too quickly, and like all the other physical encounters in the film lacks any feeling of involvement.

Likewise Conan's final confrontation with Thulsa Doom is something of an anti-climax and Doom's beheading is about as convincing as his earlier transformation into a snake.

It's difficult not to compare Conan the Barbarian to many of those sword and sandal epics of the late 50s and early 60s. Movies like *Hercules*, *The Giant of Marathon*, *Colossus of Rhodes* and any number of Samson, Ursus and Maciste potboilers. Sadly, Conan fits into this genre rather than the Sword and Sorcery cycle which has had so many false starts. For, as it lacks a hero, Conan lacks both Swords and Sorcery.



SWAMP THING

Review by Alan Jones

Wes Craven, director of the recent *Deadly Blessing* and the much reviled *Last House on the Left*, had the opportunity with *Swamp Thing* to make his work accessible to a wider audience. Perhaps he has achieved that aim as *Swamp Thing* would seem a dead cert* to head for a fast television play-off. Is it his fault that the movie is a disaster on every count? His problems while making it are well known by now, the main one being his two producers trying to make as cheap a film as possible but he did write it as well, and that is one of the major disappointments of the production. With the result of these combined efforts *Swamp Thing's* cinematic career is going to be as short-lived as its DC comic book one.

The story is a kind of *Incredible Hulk* meets *Southern Comfort* as it tells of Dr Alec Holland (*Ray Wise*) experimenting in a South Carolina hideaway and discovering a formula that stimulates plant growth. He wants to put it to good use and help the world's starving population but evil genius Arcane (*Louis Jourdan*) sees it as a method of powerful world domination. In the fight for its possession, Holland is splashed with the fluid, bursts into flames, runs into the swamp and promptly disappears. Not long after, the sole survivor of Arcane's attack, Cable (*Adrienne Barbeau*), finds the vital notebook that Arcane needs to manufacture the solution. And so begins a series of endless narrow escapes with Cable falling into Arcane's clutches only to keep being rescued by Holland, now metamorphosed into a half man/half plant, with ever diminishing returns of excitement or interest. The "thrilling" climax has Arcane swallowing the formula himself and turning into a similar man-beast prepared to fight his adversary to the death.

So much is wrong with *Swamp Thing*, it is difficult to know where to start. One of the biggest mistakes was filming on location. This realm works against its fantasy origins to a distracting degree—anyone with any sense should have realised that to make it properly the project needed to be filmed in stylised studio interiors, although the decision not to do so was obviously one of the many budgetary limitations imposed. If

SWAMP THING



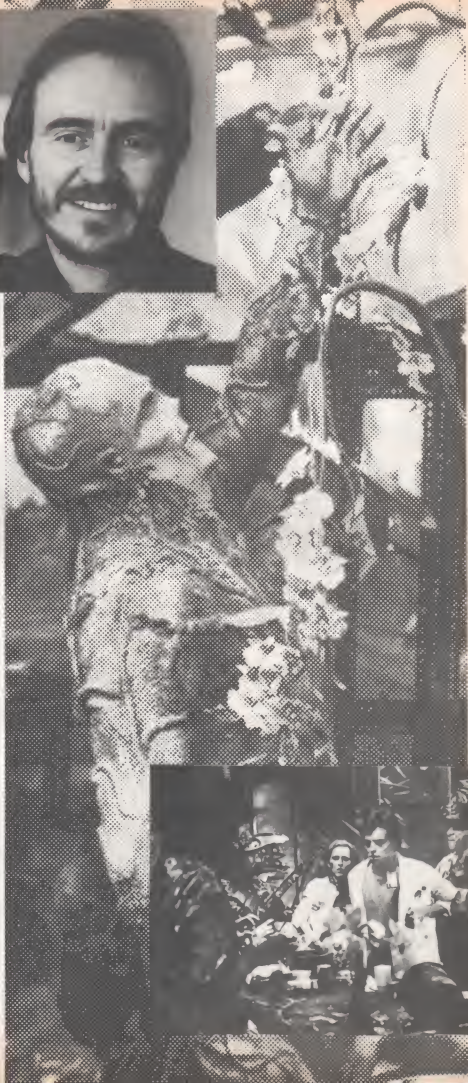
Craven wanted to emulate or pay homage to 1950s B-movie monsters with his dialogue and exposition, it is a ploy that misfires hopelessly. **Swamp Thing** contains some of the most banal lines heard in years and its non-existent characterisation renders any intended pathos pathetic. Also the idea of using frame dissolves in various patterns to suggest comic splash pages soon becomes irritating.

But by far the worst aspect of **Swamp Thing** is the special make-up effects, or more to the point, the lack of them. With what's on show here, you would never have guessed that this area of film-making had progressed at all since **Creature from the Black Lagoon** and even that costume is better than any of the ill-fitting rubber suits that the actors find themselves decked out in here.

If the film had been made with a pre-teen audience in mind, it is doubtful if even they would be fooled for a minute by costumes that can only kindly be described as sub-standard **Doctor Who**. William Munn is the man responsible for them and he was chosen to execute his designs when his bid of 80,000 dollars was the lowest on offer. We're back to the budget excuse again. The most appalling cheat occurs during Arcane's experiment with the formula on one of his henchmen. The transformation takes place under a table out of sight. Perhaps recent developments in this field with **The Howling**, **An American Werewolf in London** and **The Beast Within** have led us all to expect too much. The only stunt that works really well is where Holland becomes a human torch but that's probably because it was the simplest of the lot.

The sole attribute in this sorry mess is Mrs John Carpenter, Adrienne Barbeau, as Cable. She valiantly gets knocked around, falls repeatedly in the dirty swamp water and even takes off her clothes which is all far beyond the call of duty. The film doesn't deserve such dedication to her craft.

With **Swamp Thing** you would never have guessed that Wes Craven had in the past delivered some of the most jolting shocks in the entire genre. If he had wanted to explode his hardcore maniac of violence image he couldn't have chosen a worse or more lifeless and trivial way to do so ●



Feature by Charles Sale

A part from a few notable exceptions, science fiction and fantasy-based television series have never been "high priorities" on programmers' schedules. This might be because of the cost or the easily available American series like **Lost in Space** or **Land of the Giants**, etc. Over the last twenty five years you could count the number of British science-fiction series on the fingers of one (human) arm. But compare this figure to the endless stream of historical "costume dramas", then you'd have to be an octopus.

Yet few of those individual series, a few stand out for their originality, style and popularity.

One of these was the then ATV (now Central TV)-produced series **Timeslip**. It was first broadcast on August 17 1970, and for both writer Bruce Stewart and producer John Cooper, it was a significant change from the sort of production both had been involved in before.

Bruce Stewart had a personal interest in the paranormal but this was the first time any of those ideas had gone on paper in a dramatic form. And for producer John Cooper, **Timeslip** certainly made a change from producing *Significant* drama serials of the sixties like **The Power Game** and more recently **Diamonds**.

Timeslip was originated by Bruce Stewart who convinced John Cooper and ATV that it was worth developing. What was significant was that it was given a children's television slot. This was despite the fact neither cast, writer or producer had worked in Children's TV before. Consequently, the production, style and presentation were most definitely "adult". This might be an important reason for its success in that the viewers were, in production terms, "treated as adults". The drama, direction and special effects made no concessions for the fact that it was fantasy-based, and would have to appeal to a younger and presumably more "immature" audience.

It was originally decided to develop the series as three separate sections. All of them were based around the concept of a time "bubble". This was an invisible barrier that was accessible to two young children, Liz Skinner (played by Cheryl Burfield) and Simon Randall (Spencer Banks).

The first series took Simon and Liz back to 1940 as prisoners in a German U boat. But by a chain of unexplicable events, the time bubble had sent them back into a situation where their action had a direct bearing on the

future of the man who was to become Liz's father.

This series was a huge success and the next part of the story went into production. Now Liz and Simon were sent into the future. The world was as dangerous as it had been in 1940. Then the evil men had been political dictators. In this future they had been replaced by the scientists. Technological planning and change had taken place in this future world, producing an almost feudal-like state. The control lay in the hands of a technologically advanced elite. Head of this elite was a man named Devereax played by John Barron. He is better known now to most of us as "C.J." in the *Reggie Perrin* series.

Through planning mistakes, the attempted adjustment of the weather had gone badly wrong. One half of the world was now enveloped in arctic conditions, with the other half of the world, now a tropical rain forest. It was in this tropical half that the other class lived. They were the powerless victims of the technocrats. However, an uprising was in progress and Liz and Simon passed through the time bubble right into the middle of this uprising.

But they only find that they themselves, in this future, are members of this elite. And so the battle with Devereax and future projections of themselves.

The series introduced ideas like E.S.P. and cloning in a dramatic form that were, even by the end of the nineteen-sixties, still very new concepts. And they certainly weren't the usual material for children's TV shows.

As well as new ideas, new talents were fostered. Script editor Ruth Boswell then left ATV to move to Thames TV to produce ITV's longest running fantasy series **The Tomorrow People**. The programme furthered the acting careers of both John Barron and Dennis Quilley who has recently been seen in the Agatha Christie thriller **Evil under the Sun**.

John Cooper believes that with the tradition of series like **Doctor Who**, **Blake's 7**, and **Timeslip** that British television can handle science fiction better than Hollywood does. Britain certainly has the technical know-how and the studio expertise to create fantasy and sf based series. It also has the advantage of the creative writing talent in people like Dennis Spooner and Terry Nation.

The cinema screens already attract huge audiences hungry for more fantasy from the likes of Steven Spielberg and George Lucas. If this interest is to be reflected by Britain's most popular media—television, we can only hope that sf/fantasy based series appear a little higher on programmers priorities.

TIMES



LIP





DEATH VALLEY

Review by Bill Warren

The genre of knife-kill movies is growing more and more diffuse as studios see money in it—usually a sure sign that the genre is moribund anyway. Big studios figure that if low-budget producers can make a mint on a particular genre, then they should be able to do the same, but it's partially the fact that the films are low budget that gives them the vitality, and hence generates the popularity. Furthermore, the sleazoid producers have a clearer idea of what they are after, they work cheaper, faster, dirtier, more obviously. Studios tend to filter everything through a chain of studio head, executives, planning committees, etc; the fact that anything worthwhile ever emerges is more a testimony to the value of a given idea than to the studio system.

Such a diluted film is *Death Valley*. This was written by Richard Rothstein and directed by Dick Richards. Now, Richards has

occasionally directed a pretty decent film, like *The Culpepper Cattle Company* and *Farewell, My Lovely* (with Robert Mitchum); other films, like *Rafferty and the Gold Dust Twins* and *March or Die* are of less interest. In any event, he has shown no interest in or affinity for stalk-and-slash films; he's clearly after the money, here.

As far as writer Richard Rothstein goes, he's a law school graduate, and wrote several screenplays; two have been filmed, *Beyond the Gate* and *Shoot the Sun Down*, but neither has been released. Again, he's not interested in or apparently knowledgeable about stalk-and-slash films.

Death Valley is a killer-with-a-knife picture as perhaps made by Walt Disney. A little boy, Billy (*Peter Billingsley*), comes out west from New York with his mother Sally (*Catherine Hicks*), who is returning to her native Arizona after a sad divorce. She hopes to get together with her high school boyfriend Mike (*Paul Le*



Mat), and both Mike and Sally will approve of this liaison.

At first, the kid doesn't like it much, although he doesn't mind dressing up in cowboy duds. They drive from Arizona up to Death Valley in California (the geography in the film is anything but accurate), and Billy soon imagines a beat-up old car is following them through the beautiful but desolate National Monument.

A group of campers is murdered by an unseen assailant, and later Billy happens on the van where the bodies are hidden. He finds a strange medallion, but not the corpses, before Mike turns up and takes him back to his car. Later, the trio are stopped by a sheriff (A. Wilford Brimley) who is engaged in pulling the same van out of a canyon. It seems several other murders have taken place in the region over the past few years.

Eventually, Billy realizes a local waiter, Hal (Stephen McHattie), must be the killer—and

Hal realizes that Billy knows he's the killer—or something like that. As it turns out, Hal is actually twins, and they are *both* killers. This twist adds nothing to the film except confusion and one surprise near the end.

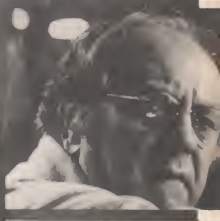
Richards does manage a good suspense scene as Hal tries to break into the bathroom where Billy is hiding (Sally and Mike are out), but the resourceful kid dodges him. Later, the three find the body of the sheriff stowed in a closet at Hal's ranch as the two mad brothers try to break in on them. There's a chase around what purports to be Death Valley's Scotty's Castle, and a fairly suspenseful fight between Mike and Hal (or his brother).

But basically, *Death Valley* is pretty tame stuff. It was a stalk-and-slash movie made by people who were wary of *really* making a stalk-and-slash film. They wanted the dance without paying the band, and the film falls between several stools at once.

Now, that's pretty much what I expected. I

had at least hoped there would be good use of Death Valley locations; *Greed* and *Zabriskie Point* had done well with the area. But actually, despite the title, there are very few scenes actually filmed in the Valley; most are on anonymous back roads and flatland probably somewhere in Arizona. The eerie desolation and quiet of Death Valley just aren't used for the effect they could have, and that's a shame. As with *Halloween*, which despite its qualities, did not exploit that holiday at all, but now has ruined it for future use, *Death Valley* has probably prevented another producer of a thriller from going on location there.

As things stand now, *Death Valley* may never be released in Britain. That's no big loss. The performers are all very good, including the boy, but the storyline and lack of suspense in the direction make it a bland film, which will probably look pretty good on television some day. ●





THE THING

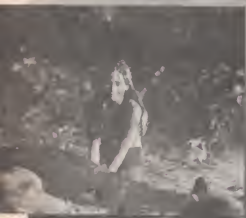
*As part of our picture preview section, we present a selection of stills from the forthcoming John Carpenter remake of Howard Hawks' brilliant 1951 movie, *The Thing from Another World*. The film will star New York escapee Kurt Russell and the show-stopping special effects of Rob Bottin. On this spread we present a series of stills from the production, courtesy of our Hollywood correspondent, the talented Bill Warren.*



Starburst presents a special photo preview of a new Stateside horror picture entitled *Humungus*. Nothing to do with *Mad Max II* (we think). Naturally we have no British opening date. All we have is the pics, courtesy of our hard-working Hollywood correspondent, Bill Warren.

HUMUNGUS





HEARTBEEPS



This page, top: The runaway robots Aqua (Bernadette Peters) and Val (Andy Kaufman) pledge their love in a hidden cave. Above: The robotised police car Crimebuster. Below: At a party in the home of a woman of the future, (Mary Woronov, right), a guest (Paul Bartel, real life lobby of Woronov) helps himself to some wine. If Kramer is the robot butler. Right: Wisecracking robot comedian CatSkil (Barry Diamond, voice by Jerry Garcia). Opposite page: Aqua, Val and their robot child Phil. Bottom row, left to right: In the robot factory Max (Kenneth Millan) and Charlie (Randy Quaid) take CatSkil to be repaired. Andy Kaufman without his robot suit. Bernadette Peters before the makeup man got to work.









A STARBURST INTERVIEW BY BILL WARREN
ALAN ORMSBY ON
THE
CAT PEOPLE

Many of the most popular directors of genre films today rose from the ranks of horror movie fandom—Steven Spielberg, Joe Dante, John Landis and Carpenter—but one of the few writers to have made this transition so far is Alan Ormsby. He had the advantage of growing up in Florida, one of the last bastions in the United States of low-budget filmmaking.

"When I was a kid," he says, "I read *Famous Monsters*, I did all this makeup stuff, I loved the classics." And from that he has gone on to write a remake of one of those classics, *The Cat People*. Paul Schrader directed this Universal film, which stars Nastassia Kinski, John Heard and Malcolm McDowell.



Alan Ormsby originally hoped to be a makeup artist, although his work in the field was "more of a hobby. I could never do straight makeup, for instance. All I could do was monsters, stuff like that. It was all I ever wanted to do."

Eventually, Ormsby did the makeups for *Shock Waves* and *Death Dream* (also called *Dead of Night*). On the latter film, his assistant was Tom Savini. Ormsby also wrote "two or three low budget horror thrillers," including *Deranged*, and actually played the leading role in *Children Shouldn't Play with Dead Things*, a kind of parody on *Night of the Living Dead*. He broke through into the bigger time with *My Bodyguard*, a non-genre film directed by Tony Bill and written by Alan Ormsby—although you never hear Tony Bill mention Alan Ormsby's name.

Ormsby says, "You have to understand that when you write movies, you are not going to get the credit."

A film is the director's. *The Cat People* isn't going to be Alan Ormsby's *Cat People*, it's going to be Paul Schrader's *Cat People*, and rightly so. He's the one who ultimately realized it on the screen. I feel a little differently about *My Bodyguard*. . . I saw Tony give interview after interview, and never mention my name. At first I was very hurt, and insulted, and outraged by that, and then I became philosophical, and said that's Hollywood, that's the way things are done here."

I interviewed Alan Ormsby in the comfortable office behind his home in Sherman Oaks, California, in the San Fernando Valley. His shelves are lined with books on screenwriting, fantastic films, and his special area of interest, animation. He's a relaxed, youthful man, putting an interviewer at ease instantly, making you feel more like a friend who's dropped over for a chat than a journalist. In our interview, in addition to *The Cat People*, we talked about horror films, fantasy films, and the people who make them. Here are some of his opinions, culled from our two-hour talk.

Alan Ormsby: Most of the new horror films are made by schlocky people who are just trying to make a



quick buck, and are trying to trade on the success of **Halloween**, or **When a Stranger Calls**, things like that. But the good ones, made by people who have an interest in doing something that has craft and skill to it, are the ones I would go see. Now, I'd go see a film by John Carpenter. I have some complaints about Carpenter's work, there are things that bother the hell out of me, but he's a talented guy and there's always something of interest. I don't think he's a writer, but I think he's a very talented director.

I think **An American Werewolf** was a failure. It was an honourable failure, though. As I'm a writer, whenever I see a picture that doesn't work, I trace it to the script. To me, Landis had no script. He had some very bold ideas, which I admire. He tried some things very imaginatively. I don't think he pulled them off, but I respect him for trying them. I know these were deliberate, and I know he did them for reasons that are interesting and original, but I wasn't satisfied.

I don't think a screenwriter's work is understood by 90% of the people who make movies, like Landis. I think he could have had a great movie if he had had a better script. But you go see any film, and all the stuff that's missing, all the stuff that doesn't work, all the stuff that doesn't satisfy you, can all be traced right back to the script. If it's not there in the script, it ain't going to be there on the screen. And you wonder why a director doesn't understand that.

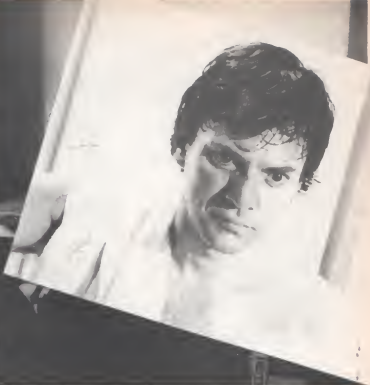
Like Carpenter. A reel writer would not have written **The Fog** the way he wrote it, where he violates all the rules of the supernatural. He never establishes how these ghosts can be phantoms and kill people at the same time. He never gives a reason why they have to appear in the fog, what the hell the fog's got to do with the goddamned movie.

I loved the idea of **Escape From New York**. I thought it was a wonderful, satirical idea for a futuristic fantasy picture. I loved Kurt Russell, he was doing a great Clint Eastwood parody. The first third of the picture, boy, did I love it. But he gets to New York, and the whole picture changes. Carpenter doesn't let all exploit the idea of New York. The whole area of New York as a metaphor for a prison is left ignored. Instead what we get is a third-rate gladiator thing in some subway station, and an ordinary chase on that bridge. Now, this is where Carpenter needed a writer. A writer would have developed that concept, given you two or three set pieces. To me, that film fails, despite its success at the boxoffice, because it did not deliver on its promise.

I wouldn't go see a picture like **Maniac**. To me that's—(long pause)—I have to say it, it's immoral. There's something about it that's immoral to me, doing that kind of stuff. I wouldn't go see those pictures. I mean any fool can get up there and have a brain coming out of somebody's head, and you'll go yuck, but to me that has nothing to do with the art of terror or suspense.

But I like Romero up to a point. I didn't go see





Knightriders, having the feeling it was not going to be a picture I would like. I like **Night of the Living Dead**, I think it's a classic of its kind. Somehow the gore in that picture seems to work. I mean it's disgusting, and yet I can accept it in that film, maybe because it's in black and white. **Down of the Dead** I liked for 45 minutes, and then I saw it was going to be the same thing over and over again, so I left. It's one of the few movies I've walked out on. It wasn't because it was a bad movie, it was because I thought I'd basically got the idea, and I didn't need to see another hour of it.

The only one of Cronenberg's films I've seen is **Scanners**, which I liked very much. **Scanners** has much more dimension to it than just gore. **Scanners** is actually a very poetic conception. In many ways he elaborates on his theme, through the telephone, through the computer. There's a lot to that picture. It's like an intellectual's horror movie. He's not doing it just for the sake of having achieved gore effects. There's something there that's going on, that's interesting.

I'm fond of Hitchcock, of course. My favourites are the standard classics. **Bride of Frankenstein**, **King Kong**, parts of the original **Dracula**. **Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein**. **Horror of Dracula** is the best of that era of Hammer horror. I used to love those Hammer pictures, but they went into a steep decline and never recovered. When I was a kid, I loved **Curse of Frankenstein**, but I've seen it again recently, and it's pretty weak. I liked Hammer's **The Mummy**, and the Oliver Reed werewolf picture (**Curse of the Werewolf**).

I was very disappointed in **Dragonslayer**, but I loved the dragon. I also loved Ralph Richardson, I loved the Sorcerer's Apprentice idea, but I hated the kid. I could not identify with that kid, and it ruined the movie for me.

I liked **The Howling**. I like Sayles, I like Dante. I think they're both very talented guys. It was very funny, and I thought the transformation stuff was terrific.

I respected **Raiders of the Lost Ark**, but God, maybe I'm getting old or something, but—I was bored. That must be like therapy to say, but for the first hour of that film I thought "I wish it would get on with it." I felt like I was in a garbage can and someone was banging on it. I wished they would slow down for just five minutes, and let the guy do something at normal speed. Harrison Ford is a wonderful actor, Spielberg is a brilliant director, a genius and all that, but I guess I don't have the super-fondness for old series that apparently the rest of the country does. **Star Wars** to me was far more enjoyable. I could

identify with the characters, it was funny, a great pleasure to watch. I felt the people who made **Raiders** were nervous, like "let's go, let's punch it up here." Everything was boom-boom-boom, and I can't take that for two and a half hours, or whatever it was.

I like Kasdan, but I wish he'd write something that isn't just a remake of some old movie. It would be nice to see, but I don't know if he's capable of it. I really would like to see these guys make a movie that's based on life rather than a bunch of old movies. People get overpraised when they make a zillion dollars at the box office. I had mixed feelings about **Body Heat**. I thought on the one hand he did a superb job as a first-time director, but why should I go see a remake of **Double Indemnity** that's not as good? There's no new insight into the material. **Body Heat** had holes in it you could drive a Mack truck through. It's not really what I want to see, but it's doing well, so I guess I'm out of step.

Why do you for The Cat People? I know the project's been kicking around quite a while.

I can't answer you there, except that I had sold **My Bodyguard**, and I was offered the job. I liked the original picture. They screened it for me, as I hadn't seen it in a while. (A) I needed a job, (B) it seemed like a job I could do something with. And so I said yes. At that point, Roger Vadim was to be the director. Ironically enough they had three earlier scripts, two by Bob Clark, and he and I had worked together before. There was also a script by someone else named Cohen. I think Bob was going to direct it at one point, but the producers didn't like his script. Anyway, that's my understanding.

Did you write your script without looking at the earlier ones?

I got the scripts, and I read the one by Cohen, and part of one by Bob Clark. I saw that there was nothing in there that I was going to use.

Were those closer to the old film than yours?

To tell the truth, I never actually read the Clark script all the way through. It didn't work for me, and so I lost interest. The other one I read just out of curiosity, to see what approach other writers had taken that the producers were unhappy with, so that I could avoid the same pitfalls. Plus, of course, I read the very original script by DaWitt Bodaan. But no, there's no relationship between what I did and what Clark and Cohen did. I started fresh, with a whole new conception.

Did you come up with the New Orleans setting?

Actually, that was Chuck Fries, who thought New Orleans would be a good place to set it. And he wanted it to deal with voodoo. You have to under-

stand, the position of a screenwriter is very difficult to explain to someone who doesn't write movies. People often have the naive idea that a screenwriter writes a script, and someone goes and films it as it's written. Everyone has been rewritten, from Paul Schrader, to Alvin Sargent, to Robert Towne. Plus, this was a job for hire: they hired me to write, and I'm obliged to fulfill whatever it is they want. And what they wanted was a remake of **The Cat People** set in New Orleans, and dealing somehow with voodoo.

Is there voodoo in the picture as it is?

No, but in the first draft I tried to use that voodoo motif, and I went to New Orleans. That draft had a kind of **Suddenly, Last Summer** feel to it. They were this old New Orleans family, with this strange history, the result of a voodoo curse. The incestuous relationship was there, but... By the time Schrader became involved, I had done a 40-page treatment and two drafts of the script. Schrader never read the treatment, or the first draft. He only read the second draft, but his response to it coincided almost exactly with mine, which is why we worked so well together. I never liked the voodoo, it was not my choice as the way to go. In my treatment, I had this mythological Indian setting with leopards eating children and assuming their spirits. The Fries people didn't want that, they wanted voodoo, so I left it out of the script. Schrader and I talked about it, I mentioned some things in my treatment he liked, so we restored them. What he did, in fact, was find their proper focus, and direct them in a way that would make them work most effectively in the script. He didn't actually come up with these ideas, but it's understandable that he would think he did.

I understand that you and Schrader have now emphasized the erotic aspects of the story, maybe like Val Lewton would do if he was around today.

The original **Cat People** is erotic, but there's no overt sexuality in it, it's all in the mood and atmosphere. A lot of people have wonderful memories of that film, because it has two or three superb sequences. The pool, the park, those things. But when you see that movie today, you also see its weaknesses, and it has many. It's not one of Lewton's best, in fact. The script doesn't hold up. I would barely make a tame television movie today, if you remade it as it was made then.

As novel as it seemed then...

Then it was in the context of the Wolf Men, the Frankenstein Monster, and to have a sort of subtle, psychological horror movie come out seemed revolutionary at the time.

In your script, you emphasized something the other



new drafts didn't, the on-screen transformations. Yes, that is in the film. It's not quite as extended as it is in the script, but it's quite effective. Someone told me that they are having problems with the company doing the effects, the Burman Studio, that the transformation is not quite what they expected.

I don't know what their problems were. The Burmans thought they had a certain amount of time, but then had to deliver it faster. This is no slight on the Burmans, but at the beginning of the project, I wanted Rick Baker or Dick Smith, because they are specialists in this kind of stuff. It was also a strategic move; I felt that because Baker had done *American Werewolf*, if he did *Cat People*, he would be in a position of having to top himself, and would come up with something really far out. We would put him in the position of competing with himself, and then we would not be in the position of competing with him. But it didn't work out, for whatever reason. How many transformations are there?

Well, there's only one, real, major, all-the-way scene. They use real cats when they're all done, and they also use a mixture of real and artificial cats.

Do you approve of the casting of Nastassia Kinski?

Oh yes, yes. I like the idea. At first I was a little unsure about John Heard, principally because I was not familiar with his work. I never saw anything he was in except *Heart Beat*, where he played Jack Kerouac, and it was hard to tell what he was like from that film. I think he's good in this. The character's conceived very differently from the one in the original film. He's not an architect, he's the curator of a zoo. In my treatment, he was a psychiatrist. I had him treating this girl who has had a dangerous animal out of the zoo. He's trying to find out why she did this; she's kind of freaked out. She has a strange identification with this cat; she believes it's not really a cat. He's trying to treat her. What happened in the treatment is that he realizes it's all true. That approach didn't work because it became verbose. It was tired, that whole psychiatrist thing. It was becoming like *Equus* or something. I thought, ah, I'll make him the zookeeper. It seemed first of all to be funny, to be ironic, which I liked. I think the picture in many ways is a kind of black comedy. You don't necessarily laugh while you're watching it, but my hope is that when people are leaving the theatre, they'll laugh about it and it'll strike them as being a kind of witty conception.

Some people object to even the hint of horror and horror together, while I've always thought that they play off each other, that one helps the other.

It's hard to pull off. In our picture, it's not horror and

humour the way John Landis attempted it, to be horrifying and funny simultaneously. Ours is not that style, the humour is more in the conception. It's more ironic than funny, actually.

The idea that a woman turns into a black panther when she gets sexually aroused is already funny. It's almost a standard joke. It's odd that no one has ever pointed out that the *Val Lewton* picture has that same undertone to it.

Actually, it has. There's another funny aspect of this whole story. When Roger Vadim was to direct it, Vadim, the notorious Vadim, Brigitte Bardot and Jane Fonda and all that, he was very concerned, as I was, that the picture would appear to be sexist (which is funny, coming from Vadim). The original picture, with the mores of the 40s, conveys a double standard implicitly in its design. The woman who is sexually intense is the woman who has to be destroyed in the picture, the unspoken law there, you know. And the hero has to end up with the kind of wholesome, all-American girl, while the girl who is his sexual obsession is a tough European and the one who is the threat, the danger. I think the original is sexist in a sense. I thought, god, we're going to get Gloria Steinem picketing the theatre. Which is not bad, probably bring in some business. My answer to that was to invent a male character who has the same problem.

Is he a priest? He looks like it, in the stills.

I thought of a religious cultist-type character who's driven by a very strong sexual desire, and yet whenever he has sex, he turns into a beast; the only way he can turn back into a human is by killing someone. The only person with whom he can have sex safely, and live in harmony, is his sister. That's the whole concept, and how the incest fits in. That's the concept I evolved, and Schrader elaborated on, and improved. I think it's an unusual film, because it's not really a straight horror picture. It has elements, obviously, and it will appeal to that crowd. There's some horrifying scenes, transformations, that kind of thing. But it also had a kind of kinky side, and it also has its humorous aspect, and it also has an almost surrealistic kind of quality to it. It's a unique picture, it combines a lot of different things.

Why did Schrader come in when Vadim left?

Well, somehow Schrader got hold of the script, read it, liked it, I guess, felt it was a commercial piece...

Which he needed.

Right. I really think his motive was that it was an interesting stylistic challenge for him to pull off, and that it was a commercial picture.

I think it's also useful for him to direct a picture he hadn't written.

I think that was also part of it. I think he was in a little bit of a dry spell, or between projects, and wasn't quite sure what he wanted to do at that point. You should really ask him, but my impression is that that was one of the attractions also, that he hadn't written it. And he didn't do any of the writing. He had input on the script, of course; anyone as strong and original-thinking as Schrader is going to have input. His directions for the rewrite were right on, and improved it. I'm happy with the script, and working with Schrader was a terrific experience. He and I got along fine.

Were you on the set a lot?

No, and I'll tell you why. The main reason was we were in the middle of a writers' strike, and it wouldn't have been terribly well received for me to be hanging around a set, crossing picket lines and things like that. However, I did go a few times. And the other reason is that I've been on a lot of sets, and once you've been there a few days, there's nothing more boring, at least to me, than hanging around a movie set when you're not actively working on the picture. It was interesting in that the first script I've ever written that was shot in a studio, and it was fascinating to go and see the sets, which were beautiful. Schrader did the design; he's a real artist.

It looks like the time has come for remakes, which is all right. I have nothing against remakes.

You know, I don't consider *Cat People* a remake. I guess technically it is, but it's so different. The basic premise is the same, and there's a couple of scenes—we have a swimming pool scene, for instance. But other than that, the emphasis is so different, the story is so different, the characters are so different, that I really consider it a new variation on the same theme rather than a remake.

There seems to be a general reaction building up against horror films with gore, so much so that directors may not be able to use it as it should be used. Is *Cat People* gory?

It has one gory scene, only one that I can think of, and it is horrifying. Even though I wrote the scene, when I saw it, I thought "this is too much." I'm hopeful that it will be trimmed down a bit and not be quite as explicit. I think that it's just that there should be a reaction against excessive gore, because I think it's been used so tastelessly, so indiscriminately. I would like to see subtlety return, suspense, the art of it. *Cat People* was fun, I liked doing that. But *Cat People* doesn't mean much to me personally, except it was a job, a craft, and I feel I did it as well as I could.

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TOM SAVINI

Tony Crawley profiles Romero's SFX man, Tom Savini. With a little help from his main producer, Richard Rubenstein.

"Hi, George!" said the college kid. "I do make-up now..."

"That's fine," said George.

"Maybe we could use you."

He had been a high school kid when George Romero first met him while casting a movie that never got made at Carnegie-Mellon University drama department in Pittsburg. Now the director was making ready a little something called **Night of the Living Dead**. The kid had heard about it. It seemed all Pittsburg had. And he was trying again to get into the movies. Romero's movies or anyone else's. But Romero's was the only act in town.

In the event—an event called Vietnam, a veritable Tour of the Living Dead—when Romero got going, the kid—that was had gone. To the war. The kid was a GI.

The name, of course, is Tom Savini. And it is, perhaps time the question was begged. Just who is Tom Savini? We've seen many faces... Arthur to John Amplas' Martin. The swashbuckling villain in **Zombie—Dawn of the Dead**. Morgan, the tempestuous Black Knight in **Knightriders**.

We've seen a lot of credits, too. For Martin, **Zombie**, **Knightriders**, of course. But also **Friday The 13th**, **Maniac** and lord knows how many other quickies and rips.

We've seen him blow his own head off—with the help of Joe Spinell's shotgun in **Maniac**.

And we've lately seen, or at least heard, how he's hopping mad with the way his work has been ripped off by his ex-employers on **Nightmare**.

He acts in the films, where he can. Indeed ►



he remains active in regional repertory companies and back at the Carnegie-Mellon U., while becoming at the same time, just about the most in demand new and young special effects technician in America's currently thriving field of the independent filmmaker.

"Whenever I do special make-up effects, I do try to play a small acting part because my parallel dream in life—besides being Lon Chaney incarnate—is to become a Star!"

He smiles as he says it. It's a mischievous smile. With a touch of a leer about it. You are not too sure if he's wholly serious or not. About his infectious energy and enthusiasm, however, there is no question.

"I just love what I'm doing in movies," he says, without needing to. It shows on his face, through his whole body as he bends and bows and sets up another blood-letting effect on a set. "And I'm quite serious about my relationship with Lon Chaney."

"That's the way all this started for me. From the day I saw Jimmy Cagney in **Man of a Thousand Faces** (1957), the story of Lon Chaney, Sr. My life has paralleled his so far. He did his own make-up, stunts and he was an actor."

"What's more than that—Chaney and I are the same height. Both our first marriages break up. And we both had sons named... Lon."

Pause. "No, no, I'm not *trying* to do all these things. They just... happen."

[How one 'just happens' to christen one's son, Lon, is obviously a question he's not interested in. No matter.]

Like so many of the movie-brat generation, the young Tom spent all his free hours in cinemas as a kid. "The only time I was not in the movie theatres was when my dad came in to drag me out," is how he remembers his youth.

"I live in a fantasyland still," he goes on. "I love living in fantasy. I'd rather be there than in reality. The scariest thing for me is

watching the television news. Last time I did that, I saw a Nicaraguan soldier blow away an ABC-tv photographer. That stuck in my mind longer than any horror film."

After his psyche-scarring duty in Vietnam, Tom Savini returned to Pittsburg to find that Romero was taking a respite from movies. He'd gone into making his own tv specials. To start with, Tom spent several years in the Southern parts of the United States, and then returned to his old university on a scholarship as an acting and directing major. He also taught make-up part-time to help earn his scholarship. He was, though, more interested in crashing into films.

"As soon as I heard George Romero and Richard Rubinstein were doing **Martin** (1977), I went over and auditioned for the part of the vampire. But it was cast. John Amplas got it. I didn't give up. I had to get in, you know. So I walked beside them both, going from room to room with them flipping my portfolio—my make-up designs and stuff. Three days later, I was hired!"

"I did the make-up, some stunts and played a role as well. Terrific! Later on, I got a telegram from George. 'Got another gig, **Dawn of the Dead**. STOP. Start thinking of ways to kill people STOP.'"

He did. Plenty of ways. He had one zombie walk straight into a helicopter. That'll do it every time. He also performed a beheading himself, as one of the mad bikers breaking into the shopping mall and slashing his machet around. He liked that. The blood spurting up and all of that. "I've never done it before," he explains. "And it is creative, you know."

It was also on night-shooting at the Monroeville Shipping Mall (near Pittsburg, where else?) that Savini dropped his famous line about the zombie make-up he had created. They came, it seemed in two kinds. Just like McDonalds. Regular and special. "Regular is just dead and decaying," according to the Savini menu. "Special means

This spread: Examples of Tom Savini's makeup effects from the George Romero film **Martin**. This was the first film Savini worked on in a makeup





capacity — he had actually auditioned for the lead role. Preceding page: Time passes and Savini's makeup becomes more sophisticated — not to say

more stomach churning. This little item was on show in the Romero/Argento teamup *Zombies — Dawn of the Dead*.

you're really deformed."

Just, in other words, what the Romero ordered. "It's really meant to be a schlock film," he said of *Zombie* in 1979. "And that's what it is."

So how did Tom start? Like the rest of us in a way. "I started copying famous monsters from the magazines. Spent hours up in me room re-creating them. I have *every* issue of *Famous Monsters of Filmland*. My association was always with the classical monsters. Now I'm doing the *Creepshow* effects with George and he walks around with a comic book strapped in front of him!"

Caroline Munro once regaled me with a long description of Tom at work on her rather forgettable *Maniac* film. She'd finished her role in the movie, but turned up to watch Tom turn on his gory impedimenta for the gruesome finale to the movie—which has Joe Spinell torn into a twosome, or more, by a bunch of Savini's living dead. One head came right off. I seem to remember . . . Caroline wasn't too pleased with the movie, but "I was fascinated watching Tom at work with his tubes and hydraulics and everything. The headless man—that was a torso top, worn by an actor kneeling at the bedside. The 'blood' was everywhere. I couldn't leave. I think I was still there at 2am. Amazing!"

To find out more about Savini, I brought his name into my recent conversation (see last two issues) with Romero's producer and business partner, Richard P. Rubinstein, who sang his praises. Loud.

"On *Creepshow*, he's really one of the top three people involved. There's George, Steve (*Stephen King*) and Tom. And to a large extent, we've added someone else, Cletus Anderson, who did the production design on *Knightriders*. Really, these four are the creative nucleus in terms of this film's collaboration. And Tom is really going to do his stuff. We wouldn't want him not to!"

"I first met him just before we did *Martin*. He'd come back to Pittsburg on a fellowship ►





to teach make-up at Carnegie-Mellon. He did the **Martin** make-up effects and played a little acting role . . . so did I, in fact. That's when George and I said, 'Jesus, Tom can play a great character role if we can find the right one for one.'

"He did another cameo in **Zombie—Dawn of the Dead**, plus all the blood effects. And finally, in **Knightriders**, we found his real acting role. He did no effects on that one except in his acting! He plays the third lead of the picture. The villain! And after that, his effects career went *fffft!* like that. **Friday The 13th, Maniac**, right down the line."

Starburst: *Down is right. His work was good, but the films stank.*

Rubinstein: Right! Exactly right! They didn't build the movies around him. George and I and Tom can go out weekends and do that kind of splatter movie. Really mundane, commercial . . . okay? We don't need anybody else. We can go out at weekends. I think we've proved we can do better than anybody in our field.

Does Tom have his own lab or facility in Pittsburgh?

No, he is working in our studio—the facility we've leased outside Pittsburgh. It used to be a school. He's been hard at work there making a whole bunch of effects and make-up tests for **Creepshow**.

How does the collaboration with him work. Does he come up with ideas which are worked into the script or vice-versa?

The script is totally Steve's. There's a complete separation of function. Steve wrote the screenplay period. Without consulting with George. At that point, George and I read the screenplay. We were overjoyed with how it came out of the box. There were some minor little things here and there . . . Then it gets down to George and Steve really amplifying the screenplay into specifics. If there's a line which says: So-and-so did blank . . . That's one thing. How it actually plays, what the intention is, the depth behind that one line is really in the dialogue between George and Steve. And then the physicality, of mechanicality of it becomes Tom's department. It becomes his turn to go over the script with George, or both George and Steve and he suggests ways of implementing the actions of the words . . . with his . . . great tricks.

Tom Savini, himself puts it another way. "I really make my living like an assassin for George and the other guys. I load up my car with all the tools of my trade and go off to Miami or New York or, sure, Pittsburgh, or wherever and . . . well, kill people is what I do. For the movies."

And never better (or should that be worse?) when in cahoots with Romero. You will, of course, still be remembering that helicopter beheading in **Zombie** . . . "We made a foam latex head full of gore, with two fire-extinguisher pumps full of blood off-camera. When that blade shaved that head, it was like slicing an egg. It was *beautiful!*

"Oh, I love George," he yells. "Working with him is . . . perfect. He's totally open to suggestions. During **Zombie**, we'd sit around between takes, passing ideas back and forth. I'd say things like, 'How about if we take a guy and stick a screwdriver through his ear . . .' And George'd wait three beats and say, 'Okay!' Two hours later, it'd be on film!"

Tom rarely suggests spiders, though . . . he has to put up with bugs in **Creepshow**. "I'm scared of spiders," he admits. "Look, I'm not into the gory aspects of my job. I consider myself a wide-angled magician. The fun of it is *inventing* how to throw a hatchet in someone's face and making it look so real that the people in the audience turn their heads away. That, to me, is the greatest compliment in my line of work." ●

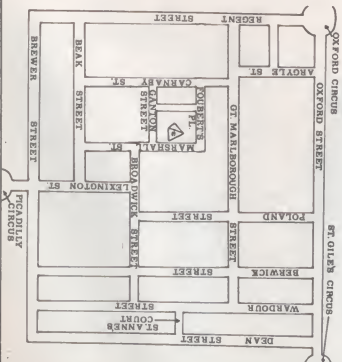
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It's only a movie

In this column back in **Starburst 45** I made an innocent little comment about *Star Trek* fans. You probably won't recall it. It was in my description of my encounter with Christopher Reeve at the 1979 World SF Convention at Brighton. I said: "I guess I should have reassured him that sf fans, despite their appearance, are a pretty harmless bunch and not to be confused with *Star Trek* fans who are capable of horrendous acts *en masse*..."

Well, a certain *Star Trek*kie by the name of Ms Jean Barron has taken strong exception to this casual aside. I quote from her letter: "To say that I am puzzled by this assertion would be an understatement—I am horrified that the reputation of *Star Trek* fans has been so casually vilified, without a shred of evidence being offered to substantiate the claim. I have attended between 14 and 15 *Star Trek* conventions since 1977 and have never witnessed any incident that could, by any stretch of an over-active imagination, be described as horrendous, or even vaguely outrageous.

"I have also attended one or two sf

conventions and, at Albacon two years ago, I saw a member of the committee dragged from the hotel, liberally smeared with black ink or dye, and tied to a lamppost while a hosepipe was turned on him. No doubt Mr Brosnan would regard this as a light-hearted prank but the *Star Trek* fans who were present found the whole incident distasteful.

"Was Mr Brosnan, perhaps, referring to the consumption of alcohol? At Channelcon in Brighton this year, I understood that the bid for next year's Eastercon was won *because the beer was cheaper!* *Star Trek* fans drink but they do not set up a base camp in every bar in the hotel.

"Would Mr Brosnan be prepared to set out, in print, his reasons for attacking *Star Trek* fandom in so offhand and spiteful manner? Has he had some "horrendous" experience at a *Star Trek* convention (*Star Trek* fans do not gather "en masse" at any other time). Perhaps he was joking, or is this yet another manifestation of the sort of intellectual snobbery demonstrated by a certain faction of sf fandom against the media?

"I would be pleased to know the answer—if

Mr Brosnan is capable of finding the words."

A good try, Ms Barron, but a futile one. It just so happens I can back up my accusation with facts. I was one of the witnesses to the Great *Star Trek* Convention Disaster of 1969. That was the occasion, you may recall, when 10,000 female *Trek*kies went on the rampage in Birmingham, kicking over milk bottles and slashing at passers-by with their plastic Spock ears. The actual cause of the riot is still shrouded in mystery, aided by a massive cover-up organised by the Central *Star Trek* Ruling Committee (presently headed by Mrs Edna Woodbine of Bognor Regis) but it is believed to have been sparked off by a projector malfunction in the middle of a screening of *Amok Time*.

It took police and troops a whole day to overcome the rioting *Trek*kies and the centre of Birmingham still bears the scars of that terrible event, as a visit to that unfortunate city will demonstrate.

Now if that wasn't a horrendous act I'd like to know what is!

As for Ms Barron's mention of the ink and lamp post incident at Albacon in 1980 I have it



starring John Brosnan

on the best authority that not *one* genuine sf fan was involved. On the contrary all those involved were members of the Glasgow "Bring Back Space 1999 Society" (it's possible that a couple of "Friends of K-9" were also mixed up in it too but at the moment I can't prove this).

No, I'm sorry Ms Barron but your accusations just won't wash (in the same way that the ink has still not washed off that unhappy *Space 1999* fan). SF fans are mild-mannered, abstemious types who can usually be found at conventions drinking decaffeinated coffee or cocoa and playing quiet games of whist. The ones doing all the drinking and carousing and yelling at conventions are invariably Trekkies, *Star Wars* fans, Yoda fanatics, comic fans, *Doctor Who* groupies, *Space 1999* followers, *Blake's 7* fans, *Jawman* lovers, *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea* disciples, *Prisoner* fans, *Logan's Run* runners, *Avengers* lovers, etc, etc...

Without all these rowdy types, and most of them are relative newcomers to the convention scene, the average sf convention would be as quiet and serene as a Sunday

School picnic. The idea of a drunken science fiction fan is as unlikely as a Trekkie with a sense of humour.

Actually, to be serious for a moment (well, a bit serious), the only time I ever visited a Star Trek convention I got thrown out for being a fire hazard. It's not that I was smoking or smouldering or anything; that was just the excuse that the organiser used in order to eject me. I guess I didn't look like a real Trekkie. Perhaps I should have taken it as a compliment but at the time I was a little annoyed as I'd travelled all that way just in order to see Gene Roddenberry. I wanted to sell him this idea for a TV series about these characters who travel around the universe in a giant airship...

And as for this thing about Glasgow being chosen for the site of next year's Eastercon simply because the beer is cheaper... well, it seems very unlikely to me. I mean to say, Glasgow is a long way to go just for a glass or two of cheap beer, especially as the price of a British Rail ticket this time next year will probably cost in the region of Switzerland's

Gross National Product. The real reason is probably that Glasgow fans have a knack of getting what they want (you don't vote for them and they break your drinking fingers)...

As for what's around in the way of fantasy films, which is what this column is ostensibly about, there's not much to report. I've already expressed in print elsewhere what I think of *Quest for Fire* (see cinema 2) so I won't repeat myself except to say I think it's a load of prehistoric twine. Ringo Starr's *Caveman* did the same thing much better... and much cheaper.

I haven't seen *Conan* yet but have been reliably informed that it's about as exciting as a Full Supporting Programme—which is very disappointing.

One film I can recommend isn't a genre movie but was written by a genre veteran—Larry Cohen (*It's Alive*, *Demon* etc). It's *I, the Jury*, based on the Mickey Spillane novel, and I can best describe it as an urban, modern-day *Mad Max*. See it if you can (Warner Brothers are treating it very coyly...) ●



book world

ROBERT HOLDSTOCK
IN THE VALLEY
OF THE STATUES
A COLLECTION OF SHORT STORIES



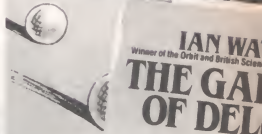
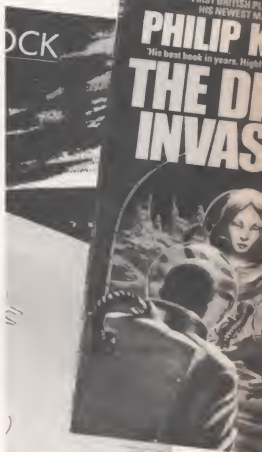
The old adage that you can't judge a book by its cover is never more true than in the case of *In the Valley of the Statues* by Robert Holdstock (Faber, £6.95). Faber are in general a quality publisher, but the covers of their science fiction titles tend to have the aesthetic qualities of a knee in the groin. The word "skiffy" (for sci-fi) has been coined to describe sf in its cheapest and nastiest forms, and this is a typical skiffy dustjacket, more likely to repel potential readers than attract them. Which is a pity, because there's nothing cheap and nasty about the contents of the book.

Robert Holdstock is the author of three sf novels from Faber and an occult novel, *Necromancer*, from Futura. *In the Valley of the Statues* is his first collection of short stories, and it's his best book so far. His work shows a fascination with the nature of time and its effect on people over generations or even millennia; there's a strong sense of time as a continuity, linking people over vast ages. His characters are often unhappy or unfulfilled in the present and are drawn towards the past or future. There's also an identification with the elemental forces of nature, particularly earth and air, or their variants, stone and wind.

At least five of the eight stories in this collection are as good science fiction as you're likely to find anywhere. "Earth and Stone" tells of a time traveller who journeys back to prehistoric Ireland to investigate the culture of the Tutanach, the mound builders of the Boyne Valley. One of Holdstock's strengths as a writer is his ability to portray cultures which are quite often alien to our own, as he does to great effect in this story. The time traveller befriends a young Tutanach and eventually discovers that the boy's use of the phrase "touching the earth" is meant far more literally than he could ever have supposed. "A Small Event" takes us into the future, where human beings have attained a great mental mastery of their bodies and can create all sorts of wondrous illusions. But with the emphasis of life having shifted so strongly from the physical to the mental, what could be more remarkable than the actual birth of a child? This is one of those rare sf stories which not only creates a truly futuristic ambience (most science fiction futures are merely the present day with a few extra gadgets added) but also peoples it with characters with whom we can identify, despite their strange powers; without this sense of identification the story would have been an inventive but essentially empty enterprise.

The title story tells of a visit of a reporter to the home of a famous sculptor in a secluded valley littered with his statues. But are they merely statues or do they have a more sinister origin? The air of brooding menace in the story is effective because it is never made explicit. "Travellers" is another time travel story, with the protagonist in this case being drawn to a woman from the future whom he has met via the time nodes which periodically pass across the earth. The less interesting stories in this volume are those which rely most on stock science fictional ideas and situations but "Travellers" is successful because it is a distinctive treatment of a traditional sf theme. It demonstrates that what makes any given writer ultimately interesting is the unique imaginative

DOCK



perspective which he presents on the world.

The final story in the book, "Mythago Wood", is perhaps the author's most impressive achievement to date. The central "character" is a stretch of primeval woodland which has remained relatively undisturbed by the march of civilization and which harbours strange creatures who owe their existence to the power of the human mind. Again there's a creeping air of menace, a powerful sense of the ties between members of the same family, and above all a fascination with the primitive, elemental forces which lurk dormant in modern man. This feeling for the human race's spiritual potential is the driving force behind all the stories in this book, giving the best of them an undeniable power. At present there are no plans for a paperback edition, so this is one well worth seeking out from your local library. You could always wrap it in brown paper.

Last month I reported the sudden death of Philip K. Dick, one of the most influential sf writers of the last thirty years. Dick's final novel, *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*, is due to be published later this year. In the meantime his two most recent novels, *VALIS* and *The Divine Invasion* are available from Corgi (£1.25 and £1.50 respectively). Dick's work has always been preoccupied with the nature of reality, and in recent years his fiction has become increasingly mystical and concerned with ideas of God. I must confess that *VALIS* defeated me utterly, seeming to be more of a tract on metaphysics than a real novel. It's the story of Horselover Fat's quest for sanity and God in the near future. The narrative is interlaced with statements such as: "The Mind lets in the light, then the dark, in interaction; so time is generated. At the end Mind awards victory to the light; time ceases and the Mind is complete."

I don't know about you, but I haven't got the foggiest idea what this means.

The Divine Invasion is less intense and abstract than *VALIS* and thus more accessible. It tells of the rebirth of the Messiah on an alien planet who is then taken to Earth to attempt to redeem the people of the planet. He achieves this aim, after a fashion, though the triumph of Good over Evil is never absolute in any of Dick's work. Because he has always been prolific, Dick's output has been variable and neither *VALIS* nor *The Divine Invasion* is a first-rate example of his work. But he has always been a stimulating writer and I hope that his last novel will be a fitting epitaph to a remarkable career.

Also from Corgi is Ian Watson's latest paperback, *The Garden of Delights* (£1.50). Watson is probably British sf's closest counterpart to Dick, since he, too, is interested in different realities and the creative forces which might shape them. In



this novel his starship crew land on a planet which is a literal creation of the painting "The Garden of Earthly Delights" by Hieronymus Bosch. Watson has a very fertile imagination but often skimps on the literary side of his writing. His characters in particular tend to be ciphers who are prone to lecture one another; this often gives his novels a dry, textbook feel. *The Garden of Delights* is, alas, subject to this flaw, and it's frustrating because the author can create convincing characters when he tries and these would make it easier for the reader to imaginatively enter into the story. His undeniably fascinating speculations would then assume more relevance to the reader.

Doctor Who fans might be interested in Peter Davison's *Book of Alien Monsters* (Sparrow, 95p). This is a collection of short stories for children, but judging by some recent TV episodes of *Doctor Who* the producers must now be assuming that the audience's average mental age is around six. The cover shows a creature resembling a cross between a mushroom and a tarantula (a mushrantula? a tarantoom?) threatening a city; but Peter Davison smiles benignly from the top corner as if promising that nothing really nasty will be allowed to happen while he's around. With the exception of a Philip K. Dick reprint, all the stories are original and by young British writers such as Robert Holdstock, Garry Kilworth, David Langford and Mike Scott Rohan. It's a pretty varied collection, its subject matter ranging from Space Invaders to semolina pudding. I searched avidly but in vain for a story featuring the horrible demise of an Antipodean air hostess. Maybe John Brosnan is the only person who could write it.



The first issue of the magazine *Interzone* (previously in *Starburst* 40) has just appeared, with stories from M. John Harrison, Keith Roberts, Angela Carter, John Sladek and Michael Moorcock. This is an enterprising new venture, run by an unpaid collective of eight people and devoted to providing a regular market from new speculative short fiction. Most of the magazine's budget goes towards paying good rates for stories, and the layout is plain and unflashy, with no interior illustrations. Four of the five writers in the first issue were regular contributors to *New Worlds* magazine in the sixties and seventies, and this tends to generate the impression that the magazine is something of a reincarnation of *New Worlds* rather than a new venture in its own right. The editors seem aware of the danger and are keen to attract good new writers (don't forget to enclose a s.a.e. if you decide to mail them your masterpiece). Meanwhile this is a solid enough first issue and well worth seeking out. Single issues have a cover price of £1.25, with subscriptions at £5.00 for 4 issues (one year) from 21 The Village Street, Leeds LS4 2PR.



This month, as promised, I have some more details regarding the forthcoming 4, due to start broadcasting in November. The new service will fall under the ownership of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) and this means that the ITV companies will have the right to sell it advertising. However, the Broadcasting Act dictates that Channel 4 must be an independent entity offering, to quote the promotional brochure, "a service with a difference".

Channel 4 is also funded by the various ITV companies and the amount will total £104 million by March of 1983. The new channel will provide up to 60 hours of broadcasting a week and, according to the recently prepared programme schedule, offers up some pleasant surprises. Amongst the series ideas mentioned will be cinema magazines, consumer reports, ethnic subjects including multi-cultural events, music, news, education and entertainment.

The Chief Executive of Channel 4 is Jeremy Isaacs, a highly experienced television producer. He was Controller of Features for Associated Rediffusion and continued in the role when Thames Television first took over in 1968. At present he is a Governor of the British Film Institute and a Fellow of the Royal Television Society. His Managing Director and Deputy Chief Executive is Justin Dukes, who for a time was the Joint Managing Director of the Financial Times.

Head of Light Entertainment is Cecil Korer, who up until recently was a Senior Editor at the BBC. He was responsible for many of the BBC quiz shows including **The Generation Game** and its his new department that has acquired the foreign comedy shows for Channel 4, a selection of which are being shown on British television for the first time. In addition to the American series, two of Australia's top comedians Norman Gunston and Paul Hogan are also making their tv debut here.

Apart from an hour of American Comedy at 6 o'clock, two nights a week, some



programmes will be screened between 9.30 and 10 o'clock every Monday evening. Amongst the titles included in the package to saturate our teatime viewing are the following:

I Love Lucy, a comedy series starring Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz. This most famous of tv shows ran from October 1951 to September 1956, re-appearing later under various titles and formats. The stories relate the adventures of Ricky Ricardo, an orchestra leader at the Tropicanna Club and his well-meaning but scatterbrained wife, Lucy. The series was made in black and white and totalled 179 episodes. Through its success Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz formed their own production company Desilu.

Two shows on a more spooky theme were **The Munsters** and **The Addams Family**, the first produced through Universal and the second, ABC Television.

The Munsters is visually more interesting than **The Addams Family**, however both shows

are highly original and extremely funny. **The Munsters**, if you don't already know, are a family who live in a creepy old mansion at 1313

Mockingbird Lane. Head of the family is Herman Munster played by Fred Gwynne, who resembles the

Frankenstein monster thanks mostly to Universal who own the copyright to the original make-up design. His wife Lily, played by Yvonne De Carlo, is a female vampire and their thoroughly repulsive son, 10 year old Edward Wolfgang (a werewolf), is played by Butch Patrick. Al Lewis plays Lily's father Count Dracula (Grandpa) and the black sheep of the family is Marilyn Munster (Beverly Owen). Amongst the family pets are Spot, a dinosaur type creature, Igor the bat and a Raven who constantly quotes from Edgar Allen Poe. The series was made in black and white and the 70 episodes were originally shown between September 1964—September 1966.

The Addams Family featured an equally creepy household at North Cemetery Ridge in which a wealthy lawyer Gomez Addams (John Astin) presides over his flock, including Morticia (Carolyn Jones) his 'vamp' type wife, children Pugsley (Ken Weatherwax) and Wednesday (Lisa Loring), Uncle Fester (Jackie Coogan) a whacko relation who is

capable of illuminating light bulbs placed in his mouth and Lurch, a zombie-like butler played by Ted Cassidy. One of the many highlights of the Addams abode is Thing, a disembodied hand that lives in a box. Others include Cleopatra, Morticia's African stranger plant, and octopus called Homer and Wednesday's black-widow spider.

During 1969 and 1970, NBC produced a series entitled **My World and Welcome To It**, based on the works on James Thurber. Originally shown on the BBC, the show proved to be very popular, extending the format explored in the Jack Lemmon picture **The War Between Men and Women**. Each story took place at the home of John Monroe, a cartoonist who under continual pressure from his wife Ellen (Jean Hotchkis) and daughter Lydia (Lisa Gerritson) to face up to everyday realities, finds it necessary to retreat into his own imaginary world in which his cartoons come to life. Although it was cancelled after one season, it has been long overdue for a repeat showing.

An American show never screened in Britain was **Wayne and Shuster Take An Affectionate Look At...** a 60 minute series in which hosts Johnny Wayne and Frank Shuster present with the aid of film and commentary, 9he comic film trends of the past and the lives of individual screen comedians. The series was originally aired in 1966.

So that everyone may have the opportunity of watching these old shows, Channel 4 with the aid of the IBA's new network of high-power transmitters, will be broadcasting across the nation almost immediately. This will mean that the new channel will have a viewing audience of over 40 million people. As more information becomes available, I'll keep you informed.



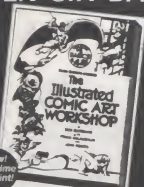
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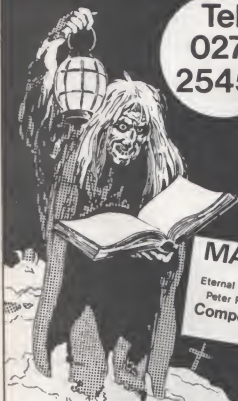
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ANYTHING
YOU SEE



The above promotional artwork heralded the arrival of a movie which was to radically change the style of horror films in the 1940s. Rather than the overt horrors of *Frankenstein* and *The Wolf Man*, *The Cat People* worked on the audience's imagination. Director Jacques Tourneur gave the audience shadows and they saw monsters. A perfect example of the theory that what you imagine is a thousand times more horrifying than what any film maker can ever show you. Starburst presents a feature on the original *Cat People* by Martin Coxhead. ▶

CAT PEOPLE

The 1942 version of *The Cat People* is one of those films regarded as a classic of horror cinema. Its director and producer have established reputations which rank them alongside the likes of Tod Browning and James Whale. Producer Val Lewton and director Jacques Tourneur first met on the set of MGM's 1935 production of *A Tale of Two*

Cities during the filming of the *Bastille* sequence by the second unit. Tourneur graduated from second unit direction to full features as Lewton was signed by RKO to produce a series of low budget films. *The Cat People* was the first and the evolution of the script was an interesting one. The title was suggested to Lewton by Charles Koerner, the head of the studio at the time. Lewton knew that the studio wanted a sleazy horror movie to go with the catchpenny title but decided to do something a little more subtle and intelligent.

Choosing Tourneur as his director the first draft of the script was submitted to Lewton by

writer DeWitt Bodeen. Bodeen's script was initially set in the eighteenth century, a fact disliked by Lewton who undertook a major script re-write, updating it to the present day.

The Cat People involved a young girl who leaves her Balkan homelands to live in New York City. The girl, Irena (played by Simone Simon) falls in love with, and marries a young draftsman (Kent Smith playing a character with the unfortunate name of Oliver Reed). Their marriage is never consummated due to Irena's fear of an ancient curse on her Balkan home, a curse that women, when sexually aroused, would transform into deadly puma-like cats. The husband enlists psychiatric



help, but this doesn't help. Eventually Reed is forced into an affair with an old flame (Jane Randolph.) Irena's discovery of the liaison arouses her jealousy . . . and the curse.

For 1943 **The Cat People** dealt with surprisingly "explicit" themes such as sexual repression, Freudian psychology and hinted lesbianism in a non-exploitative and serious way. It was both Lewton's and Tourneur's intention to make a film in which the terror was hidden and unseen. The Cat-creature makes three "appearances", but each is a superbly arranged sequence of suggestion, leading the audience think it has seen more than was actually on the screen. The film's

most famous scene has the terrified Alice, Reed's lover, pursued by the Cat-creature. As she runs we only see the cat's shadow. The scene gains tension and momentum until we hear the sudden hiss of a bus door opening, signifying her safety.

The next attack on Alice occurs in a deserted swimming pool. Reed arrives just in time but, then, Alice sees the robe she left by the side of the pool. It has been shredded by claws.

For the climax of the film, Lewton was forced by his executive producers to insert one shot of an actual panther, a move he was bitterly opposed to. For all the film he had

relied on creating terror which was almost subliminal, the viewer only realising what had been shown after he had seen it.

Although praise must go to editor Mark Robson (who would later become a director himself) most of the credit of **The Cat People** must go to Tourneur. His skill at making the simplest shot or area of shadow something deeply unsettling has never been equalled.

The film had difficulties. It was only Val Lewton's dogged defence of his friend Tourneur that prevented him being fired from the film by the studio heads. If the bosses were angered by the director the final budget would have appeased them, the film coming



in on schedule and under budget at a cost of \$130,000.

The first showing for the studio heads was a disaster. To a man, they hated it. For a while it was rumoured that it would be shelved and written off as a tax loss. Lewton and Tourneur found themselves being sent to a cross between Coventry and Limbo. The film was eventually played at a New York cinema for an initial week-long run. It was a tremendous success, eventually running for over three months. Suddenly they were both back in favour at RKO. The two collaborated next on the superb *I Walked With a Zombie* in 1943 and the less satisfying *The Leopard Man* the

same year. The two then worked independently, Lewton producing the sequel to *The Cat People*, entitled *The Curse of The Cat People*, directed by Gunther Von Fritsch and Robert Wise. Although it had little to do with the previous film it again starred Simon and Smith and was another superbly atmospheric and gripping tale. Tourneur went on to direct some fifteen other thrillers and westerns, making in 1957 what most people believe to be his best film, *Night of the Demon*. Based on M.R. James' story *Casting the Runes*, it was a terrifying tale of modern-day black magic which showed to full advantage his skill at using light, tone and

shadow to create unease even at the calmest and "safest" moments. Alas he suffered the same interference his friend Lewton had experienced with *The Cat People*, inserting at the producers insistence, scenes of the Demon which he had wanted to keep unseen. The films of Lewton and Tourneur were examples of total terror by the power of suggestion alone. The last word belongs to Jacques Tourneur; "*In the swimming pool sequence the cat was my fist. We had a diffused spotlight and I used my fist to make shadows against the wall. But to this day, people insist there was a cat by that swimming pool.*" ●



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Last year, a cheap, ordinary Spanish-Italian Western made weighty amounts of money the world over. It had no real stars, no production values, and not much story. What it did have, and the secret of its success, was 3-D.

Three-dimensional films have a long and shaky history, probably longer than even most movie freaks know. The first was in 1903, an anaglyph (red-and-green) short made by the Lumiere Brothers. There was a long pause until 1921, when two were released, *Plastigrams* and *Plasticon* (not a plastics convention!). A passle of such pictures followed the next year in several different processes, including the first 3-D science fiction movie, *M.A.R.S.* (also called *Radiomania*). A few shorts in 3-D were scattered through the thirties and forties, including Pete Smith's *Three-Dimensional Murder*, which featured Ed Payson popping up here and there as the Frankenstein Monster.

Seeking processes to rival the burgeoning popularity of television, several shots turned up in 1948 (from Russia and Holland) and 1951 (from England), but the explosion heard round the world was in 1952, with the release of Arch Oboler's *Bwana Devil*.

Over the next two years, Hollywood churned out dozens of 3-D features and shorts. It was quite awe-inspiring, for instance, to see a Nat King Cole short in 3-D; that great singer had a large, Joe E. Brownesque mouth, and the camera leaned eagerly into the moist cavern from which such beautiful sounds emerged. But he just stood there. Not much 3-Dism.

3-D features were frequently Westerns. There was *The Charge at Feather River*, *Fort Ti*, *Gun Fury*, *Hondo*, *Inferno*, *The Moonlighter*, *The Stranger Wore a Gun*, *Those Redheads from Seattle*, *Jesse James Vs The Daltons*, *The Nebraskan* and others.

In films as varied as *The Glass Web*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *Wings of The Hawk* and *Martin & Lewis' Money from Home*, objects were thrown, leaped, or simply protruded off screens. Science fiction and horror films seemed like natural properties for 3-D filming. After *House of Wax* led the way, Vincent Price leered 3-Dishly again in *The Mad Magician*, and Karl Malden crept through the WarnerColor *Phantom of the Rue Morgue*. At Universal-International, *It Came from Outer Space* and *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* were almost as popular as Francis the Talking Mule and Ma & Pa Kettle. *Cat Women of the Moon* was a bizarre freak in which the action progressed horizontally across the cheap movie's cramped sets. *The Maze*, *Gog* and *Gorilla at Large* were all in 3-D.

Most bizarre of all 3-D films. Aside from its famous alien (a gorilla in a space helmet), the most notable aspect of the picture was that it wasn't in 3-D at all; there were even lawsuits lodged against the producers because of this. But they apparently thought in all innocence that all you had to do to make a 3-D film was to project two prints simultaneously with the lenses a few inches apart. So those who went to see *Robot Monster* and dutifully donned their grey Polaroid glasses discovered themselves watching not only a terrible movie, but an absolutely flat, depthless terrible movie.

All 3-D features of the 1950s were shot with polarizing filters and viewed with grey Polaroid glasses. The idea that it took red-and-green glasses to watch these pictures is simply false. It is true that some of them more recently have been printed in red-and-green

3-D so that they can be shown with one projector; this was done with *It Came from Outer Space*, *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*, *Revenge of the Creature* and, oddly, *Miss Sadie Thompson*. But they were all originally shot with Polaroid filters, not in anaglyph's red-and-green.

There were also scads of strange shorts, some of them cartoons. *College Capers*, *The Hypnotic Hick*, *Melody*, *Popeye the Ace of Space*, *Lumberjack Rabbit* (a Chuck Jones *Bugs Bunny* cartoon), *Casper the Friendly Ghost* in *Boo Moon*. Plus a couple of Three Stooges shorts.

The fad died. Not really because people got tired of the headaches that 3-D films are alleged to have given them; that was relatively rare. The more probable cause was simple boredom with the films they were given. Producers kept throwing things off the screen at the audiences, instead of using 3-D for its impressive illusion of depth going into the screen, and films in which this aspect of 3-D was actually utilized to good effect, such as *Gun Fury*, were rare. And even then, the producers insisted that the directors (Raoul Walsh, in that case) include a number of popping-off-the-screen scenes. Films in which that was all there was to be seen, such as William Castle's dreadful *Fort Ti*, are what really killed 3-D very dead very quickly.

Furthermore, theatre owners complained about beat-up prints, and having to use two projectors continuously. As a result, some major pictures like Hitchcock's *Dial M For Murder*, and *Kiss Me Kate*, don't seem to have had any 3-D screenings until many years after, in the 1970s. A couple of films that were planned to be in 3-D, including *Them* and *Invaders from Mars*, were shot flat instead.

Since 1954, there have been a few desultory attempts to revive the process, but nothing has really come of it. In 1960, a bland underwater film, *September Storm*, was shown in a few major cities in 3-D. *The Mask* included some anaglyph sequences. In 1966, Arch Oboler, whose *Bwana Devil* had kicked off the fad, released *The Bubble*, a wretched sf film which did boast extremely good 3-D (using Polaroid glasses). Oboler had devised a method whereby only one projector was necessary; the left-and-right images were printed together, one stop the other, in a normal 35mm frame. A prism mounted in front of the projector lens combined the two images and added polarization.

Despite being modestly profitable, *The Bubble* was not really a success, and no one in Hollywood chose to pay attention to it; they were wary of fads. When *The Bubble* was released, the title was changed to *The Fantastic Invasion of Planet Earth*; you don't change the title of a hit.

The Bubble led to nothing else of its nature. Sex films became the new province of 3-D, which makes some sense. Titles like *The Stewardesses*, *The Chamber-Maids*, *International Stewardesses*, *The Playmates*, *Love in 3-D*, *Black Lolita*, *The Lollipop Girls* in *Hard Candy*, *Starlet*, *Wildcat Women* and others used 3-D, but not all that many people went to see them. Or at least, would admit to seeing them. 3-D had returned to a sideshow novelty.

The occasional horror film in 3-D still turned up, such as *La Marca del Hombre Lobo* (released in the U.S. inexplicably retitled *Frankenstein's Bloody Terror*), *The Flesh and Blood Show*, *Asylum of the Insane*, *A*P* Not to be Confused With the Original King Kong* and, of course, the notorious Andy Warhol's *Frankenstein* (Flesh for *Frankenstein*). Although there was a public ready and anxious to see most of these films, no one in charge of money for films really paid much attention. ►

3-D M



MOVIES / PARASITE



That is, not until **Comin' At Ya**. This pathetic Western made a mint in the United States, and **House of Wax** was swiftly reissued with yet a third ad campaign (it had been rereleased in 3-D in the early 70s)—and it made a bundle as well. This time, in a Hollywood more desperate than in years, the lesson was not lost. This year, god help us, sees **Friday the 13th Part III** in 3-D; the hoped-for remake of **The Creature from the Black Lagoon** will be in 3-D (if it is made, which is now highly unlikely). Don Glut's **Teenage Monster Rumble** is scheduled for 3-D production. And then there is **Parasite**, the first of the new rush of 3-D films to reach the market.

The process used in **Parasite** is Stereovision 3D, who is located in North Hollywood. The 3-D consultant on **Parasite** was Randall Larsen, and via a studio flyer, he explains a little more about 3-D movies for those who haven't seen them, about why it works.

In normal vision, our left and right eyes give the brain two slightly different views. Our eyes are about 2½ inches apart so... the left eye sees slightly more of the left side of an object and the right sees slightly more of the right side. With these two views and past experience, our brain knows not only how wide and how high, but also how deep things are.

There have been experiments at 3-D filming using only one camera lens and one image, but these rarely succeed, or the 3-D resulting is inadequate. In any event, whether it is done by means of two cameras or one camera with a beam-splitting apparatus, two images absolutely must be filmed. The trick lies in combining them.

One method is, as I mentioned before, the anaglyph process. One lens, corresponding to the left eye, is projected through or printed in a vivid colour, say red; the other uses the "opposite" colour, a green or greenish blue. The idea is that when you wear your glasses with the appropriately coloured lenses, the green eye will see the red images as black, and the green images will be invisible. In practice, however, the colour balance is often slightly off so it doesn't really work all that well.

There have been other systems, sometimes exotic and elaborate. One system in 1922 involved projecting the right and left images alternately on the screen, a frame at a time; the viewer watched through lenses and a revolving shutter contained in an aluminium casing. It was this system that was used for **M.A.R.S.**

In the 1930s, the "parallax panoramagram" was demonstrated, which involved photographing images in a curved mirror combined with rear-screen projection. Several times, beaded screens or screens with long straight ridges were used (with the parallax system) in an attempt to give an illusion of three dimensions, similar to 3-D postcards available today. But these required the viewers to be seated in a straight line, pretty much; a few feet to one side or the other, and the image on the screen became a meaningless mess.

However, in the late 1940s, the Russians came up with a usable (if complicated) variation on the parallax system, and several feature-length 3-D films were released, including a version of **Robinson Crusoe**. Although the 3-D effect was good from several different positions, and as with all parallax systems, did not require the use of glasses, the system was very cumbersome. It involved a screen made of glass, etched on one side with a series of parallel grooves, and a rear-screen projector. It does not seem to have been exhibited outside of Russia.

It wasn't until the introduction of feature-length films involving Polaroid lenses that 3-D came into its own. Here, two cameras shot through Polarizing lenses. As Randall Larsen explains:

"You see, light is a little bit like a wave and a little bit like particles. It vibrates in different directions. A polarizing filter lets light through only if it is vibrating in a certain direction—up and down, for example; sideways light can't make it through an up-and-down filter. By projecting the two images through different polarizing filters, the light for the right eye vibrates in a different direction than the light for the left eye. We can then 'decode' the images on the screen by wearing the proper polarizing filters over the left and right eyes. The right eye polarizing filter in the glasses prevents the right eye from seeing the left eye image while allowing the right eye image to come through," and vice versa for the other eye.

3-D flew high for two years until it was brought down by audience disinterest as well as complaints by theatre owners. After all, they had to either run their two projectors continuously, or to buy two more for changeovers. Most 3-D films did without standard changeovers, but used far larger reels of films, so that there was only one break in the movie, at the midway point. If one projector was even one frame out of phase with the other, headaches did indeed result. When one film broke and footage needed to be removed, either the other reel had to be cut in exactly the same way, or black footage of the correct length inserted into the damaged reel. (When you see a film with some of this black footage in it, the effect is that you have suddenly gone blind in one eye). As the sound track was carried on only one of the two prints, any splicing had to be done with care.

Just at the end of the 1950s 3D boom, single-projector, single-print systems were introduced, and desperate distributors made generous offers to theatre owners if they would just play some of their films in the single-projector process. But to use this system, special prisms or other splitting systems were necessary. (Among the titles offered in single-lens systems were **Gun Fury**, **Southwest Passage**, **Gog**, **Drums of Tahiti** and the last 3-D feature for years, **Revenge of the Creature**). But there were almost no takers for this. In fact, even many self-styled experts in the field of 3-D movies don't know that single-lens processes were made available in 1954.

And now single-lens 3-D systems are back—are, in fact, the only 3-D systems now available. There are several different competing systems now in use, but they are basically the same, with the two primary differences being whether the images are printed over-and-under or (rarer) side by side, and whether two cameras or one were used to film the movie.

Irwin Yablans, who made **Halloween**, and Charles Band, who made some low-budget minor films, made **Parasite** in 3-D. This is a silly and grisly horror item, but it's very likely to make a great deal of money. If it makes enough, perhaps Universal can be persuaded to put sufficient money into the new version of **The Creature from the Black Lagoon**, and maybe 3-D movies will again be part of the marketplace.

I don't think anyone wants to see all movies in 3-D; it's hard to imagine how it would improve **Ordinary People** or a Woody Allen film. But thrillers and 3-D were made for one another. Whatever the quality of **Parasite**, let's hope that it restimulates interest in one of the most entertaining film processes of all





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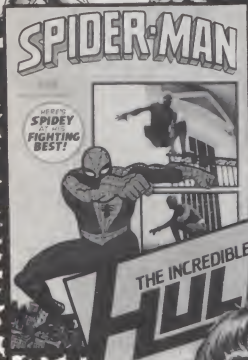
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